

2020

## Law Enforcement Stress, Gender, and Work Performance

Angelia L. Harger  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Walden University  
2020

Abstract

Law Enforcement Stress, Gender, and Work Performance

by

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MA, Walden University 2012

BS, Murray State University 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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## Abstract

Police officers experience continuous periods of work-related stressors throughout their careers, affecting job performance, sleep, and family life. However, there is limited qualitative research in the area of police officer gender and stress, in law enforcement. Therefore, the purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study, guided by resilience theory, was to examine how gender and stress influence work performance, sleep, and family life in police officers. Six male and 4 female patrol officers were individually interviewed to gather information related to (a) their experiences regarding stress, (b) signs and symptoms of stress, (c) how gender affects stress, and (d) their coping mechanisms. Results revealed themes related to family and social interaction, health, and work performance. Underlying themes for females were (a) female roles, (b) judged, (c) more work stress than males, (d) mother role at work, (e) psychological talkers, (f) stress eating, (g) weight, (h) stereotypes, (i) emotional, and (j) better listeners. Themes identified for the males were (a) that they were challenged less than females, (b) carry their workload, (c) male health, (d) anger, (e) internalization, (f) role of a male, and (g) block things out. This study could impact social change by creating awareness of and education regarding identifying work-related stress, the importance of early intervention, and the development of resources specific to gender when indicated for optimal health and wellness for police officers, law enforcement personnel, and their families.

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## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	v
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background.....	1
Problem Statement.....	4
Purpose of the Study.....	4
Research Question .....	5
Framework.....	5
Definition of Terms .....	6
Assumptions, Limitations, Scope and Delimitations .....	6
Significance .....	8
Summary.....	8
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	10
Introduction.....	10
Literature Search Strategy.....	11
Resiliency Theory .....	12
Gender in Work Performance .....	13
Effects of Work-related Stress in Police Officers.....	14
Conceptual Framework.....	15
Qualitative Research .....	15
Literature Review .....	16
Gender and Family.....	16

Male vs. Female Police Officer Stance .....	26
Stressors .....	26
Sleep Issues.....	35
Health .....	42
Personal Risk Factors for Work Related Stress .....	53
Programs .....	56
Assessment.....	58
Police Officer Wellness Programs .....	59
Effects of Stress .....	59
Wellness .....	60
Intervention and Wellness Programs .....	61
Summary .....	62
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	64
Introduction.....	64
Research Design and Rationale .....	65
Definition of Central Concepts .....	65
Roles of the Researcher .....	67
Methodology.....	69
Participant Selection Logic .....	69
Instrumentation .....	71
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection .....	72

Data Analysis Plan .....	73
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	75
Credibility .....	75
Dependability .....	76
Conformability .....	77
Ethical Procedures .....	77
Summary and Conclusion.....	80
Chapter 4: Results.....	81
Introduction.....	81
Setting .....	82
Demographics .....	82
Data Collection .....	83
Data Analysis .....	84
Evidence of Trustworthiness .....	85
Credibility .....	85
Dependability .....	86
Conformability .....	86
Results.....	87
Lived Experiences from Work-Related Stresses .....	88
Experiences Regarding Stress.....	89
Signs and Symptoms.....	95



Gender Affected by Stress .....	101
Coping Mechanisms.....	107
Summary.....	117
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations .....	120
Introduction.....	120
Interpretation of the Findings .....	121
Research Question.....	122
Work-Related Stress .....	122
Health Concerns.....	123
Family .....	124
Theoretical Framework.....	125
Limitations of the Study .....	125
Recommendations.....	126
Expanded Debriefing .....	129
Human Factor.....	129
Wellness Programs.....	131
Other Involved Personnel.....	132
Implications .....	132
Conclusion .....	133
Research Question in Proposal .....	149
Interview Questions .....	149

## List of Tables

Table 1. Identified Stressors for Female Police Officers .....	92
Table 2. Identified Stressors for Male Police Officer .....	93
Table 3. Signs and Symptoms of stress for Female Police Officers .....	99
Table 4. Signs and Symptoms of stress for Male Police Officers .....	99
Table 5. Identified Coping Mechanisms by Gender .....	112

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Background**

Police officers experience job-related stress throughout their careers, often resulting in physical and psychological stresses. These stressors affect work performance, health, decision making, job safety, sleep, and family. There are many quantitative studies on the subject that reflect percentages of work-related stressors in gender. However, qualitative studies examining personal thoughts on the work-related stressors in gender are limited. Law enforcement departments need to look at how gender plays a part in how work-related stress is handled for short- and long-term effects on physical and mental health. There is still limited qualitative research supporting how work-related stress and gender in law enforcement affect the individual, as well as family members. It is apparent that all police officers are influenced by work-related stress throughout their careers because it is considered part of the job. However, police officers' jobs are becoming more demanding and dangerous due to the growth in population and criminal activity since the 1970's (Hickman, Fricas, Strom, & Pope, 2011). As a result of the added stressors, police officers are subjected to further emotional and physical challenges and strains. There is a lack of research examining stress in gender and work performance, and how these factors impact sleep and work-family relationships. Additionally, there are unanswered questions regarding the individual perspectives of police officers. The results of this study include police officers' personal stories.

The results of this research study could impact social change by actively promoting education on how stress should be treated proactively in work performance, health, and family. The study may create awareness of and education regarding identifying work-related stress and the importance of early intervention, as well as the development of resources specific to gender when indicated for optimal health and wellness. Programs may need to be reevaluated which recognize the hazards of stress and take steps to decrease or eradicate the origins that are controlled, such as organizational and critical incident stressors. Organizational stressors that can be controlled many include (a) extended work hours, (b) shift work, (c) negative public image, and (d) governance or management structures (Ramey et al., 2012). Critical incident stressor may include (a) exposure to trauma, (b) physical danger, (c) death, (d) crime, (e) homicides, and (f) accidents and injuries (Ramey et al., 2012). Critical incident stressors can be reduced by reduction of shift work to an 8-10-hour day and mandated overtime (Ramey et al., 2012). Still, occupational stress is four to six times greater than critical incident stress (Ramey et al., 2012). The reason is because occupational stress results in extreme exhaustion that puts the police officer at risk for health issues (Ramey et al., 2012).

Police management should examine the current methods used to identify and treat police work-related stress, particularly regarding merging factors leading to police officer stress. Stress management programs in police departments need to be tailored to fit the individual needs of the officer specific to gender differences. Gender-specific awareness

is needed in police stress management programs to understand the diverse impact of work environment and coping skills on police stress.

This study examined the differences in how stress and gender influenced work performance. The effects of work-related stress, physical and psychological, in police officers was explored between genders. Also examined was how work-related job stress interfered with sleep and family life. Topics covered in the study included personal risk factors for work-related stress, programs, assessment, interventions, and wellness programs.

The research problem compared stress between genders and work performances in police officers. Past research has been conducted on the origins generating stress and treatment to reduce anxiety, such as education, relaxation techniques, meditation, reducing frequency of shift rotation, diet, and promoting wellness programs (Robinson, MacCulloch, & Arentsen, 2014). There are numerous quantitative studies, yet there are few qualitative studies where the participants tell their stories. Research problems identified were the lack of and/or fewer female participants willing to participate in a qualitative study due to being labeled as the weaker gender. There are still attitudes that stereotype police officers as being tough. Female police officers are being recognized for their work performance and not because of gender. In other words, the female police officer brings a certain skill set to the law enforcement profession, such as handling situations that involve females. Nonetheless, police officers are human and experience significant life threatening risk factors in their daily jobs. The narratives of the police

officers enabled me to examine themes that developed regarding the police officers' careers, reconcile conflicting stories, and identify stressors and challenges, allowing for possible improvements in the workplace related to gender, stress, and work performance.

### **Problem Statement**

Law enforcement careers are ranked as one of the highest in work-related stress, affecting job performance along with sleep experience and work-family conflict (Arnetz, Arble, Backman, Lynch, & Lublin, 2013). Work-related stress causes both physiological and psychological problems, such as poor work performance, health issues, delayed decision making, risks in job safety, sleep disturbances, hormone imbalance, substance abuse, and suicide (Vargas de Barros, Martins, Saitz, & Bastos, 2012). These stressors can negatively affect an officer's decision-making process, compromising safety and judgment (Allwood, 2012).

A gap in the literature suggests a need for future examination in qualitative studies regarding genders and its relationship to stress in job performances, sleep experiences, and family life (Hassell, Archbold, & Stichman, 2011). Important contributions of the study include examining an under-researched area involving the effects of stress on work performance in males and females, health issues, and family relationships (see Robinson et al., 2014). Shift work impacts a police officer's life, both professional and personal.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to examine how gender and stress influence work performance, sleep, and family life in police officers. More specifically, the participants' personal experiences, perceptions, and what factors motivated them in efforts to have a better understanding of their experiences. Qualitative literature examining gender and work-related stress associated with police work is limited. Qualitative studies are needed to evaluate how work stress affects work performance, sleep, and family life in male and female police officers. This indicates that the researchers ask questions of why and how the participants' experiences affected them, their personal lives, and the lessons learned from their experiences (see Creswell, 2013).

### **Research Question**

The research question that guided this study was, "What are the lived experiences of how work stress affects performance, sleep, and family life in male and female police officers?"

### **Framework**

Theories of work-related stressors in law enforcement have been the main topic for much of the previous research in this area. A conceptual framework for this study was a qualitative narrative approach based on the resilience theory. The theory suggests that individuals are capable of adjusting to situations producing stressors and challenges affecting work, health, family, and financial issues (De Terte & Stephens, 2014). The research question in this study compared stress between genders and work performances in police officers. Further research is need regarding the influence of gender on police

officers' shift work, health, and family life. Creswell's (2013) method explains the course of action for research about an idea or assumption to understand the objective. This concept connects the study with a modern understanding that was led by a theory. It also allowed the participants to share their lived experiences.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Absenteeism:* not attending work.

*Family conflict:* work-related issues continued after work hours causing conflict in the home.

*Health issues:* the term is used identify risk factors associated with stress, such as cardiovascular disease, physical inactivity, hypercholesterolemia, hypertension, tobacco use, substance and alcohol use, obesity, and hyperinsulinemia (Ramey et al., 2012).

*Presenteeism:* presenteeism was measured by how many times the employee went to work despite feeling sick or experiencing health issues (Deery, Walsh, & Zatzick, 2014).

*Stress:* work-related stress associated with police performance.

### **Assumptions, Limitations, Scope and Delimitations**

The limitations in the study are few. The study focused on male and female police officers experiencing work-related stressors affecting job performance, sleep, and family life. Family members of the participants were not interviewed in the study. The participant sample included six male and four female participants. An assumption of the data was that the data obtained from the interviews were accurate and truthful. Untruthful



answers can skew the data and outcome of a study. A delimitation of the study may be not having enough female or male participants. Limitations suggest that the population sample can be too large, resulting in more time and money. Questions during the interviews can be biased toward specific groups, resulting in refusal to participate or honest answers. There is also the consideration that the sample size can be too small, indicating not enough participants to conclude an effective study.

Qualitative research examines participants' personal experiences, perceptions, and incentives in efforts to have a better understanding of the experiences. This indicates that the researchers should ask the questions of why and how the participants' experiences affected them and the lessons learned from the experiences (see Creswell, 2013). Theory denotes a specific type of explanation of a phenomenon experienced through guided concepts and principles (Creswell, 2013). Vargas de Barros et al. (2012) conducted a research study on emergency workers' mental health, shift work, and sleep problems. Further research is needed on the influence of police officers' gender on shift work, health, and family. Creswell (2013) suggested that in the theoretical framework, the researcher devises a theory in which phenomenon is supported, predicted, and understood. This study connected me with current knowledge guided by theory. The theory used in this study advocates that some police officers do not report concerns due to stereotyping, loss of career, and/or negative feedback from coworkers. A conceptual framework's function is to show that there is very limited data about the phenomenon, signifying more research is needed in this area (see Creswell, 2013).

### **Significance**

The significance of the study involves the lived experiences of police officers, providing information and data to existing qualitative studies. This study has significant value in the contribution to literature because it examined an under-researched area involving the effects of stress on work performances in genders, health issues, and family connections (see Robinson et al., 2014). The interviews allowed the police officers to tell their own stories. The participants were able to narrate their personal experiences, including (a) how their work performance roles were affected by stress, (b) sleep issues, and (c) family life. This study provided results regarding the differences between gender in relation to job stress, sleep issues, and family life.

### **Summary**

Many police officers experience problems as a result of job-related stress. These problems hinder the police officer's ability to make split second decisions that can result in life or death and affect male and female police officers mentally and physically. Police departments recognize the perils of stress and are taking steps to decrease or eradicate the sources that they have control over, such as shift work, overtime, negative public image, and management structure (Ramey et al., 2012). This research could impact social change by actively promoting education on how stress and gender affects work performance, health, and family. The goal of the study was to examine how work-related stress affects gender in the police force by allowing the participants to tell their stories. Future research is needed to create awareness of and education regarding identifying work-related stress,

the importance of early intervention, and the development resources for police officers. There is a significant lack of qualitative literature examining gender and work-related stress associated with police work. Future qualitative studies should evaluate how work stress affects performance, sleep, and family issues in male and female police officers. Chapter 2 includes a review of relevant literature to support the study. In Chapter 2, I review the literature related to gender and family, male versus female stances, stressors, sleep issues, health, personal risk factors for work-related stress, programs, wellness programs, wellness, and interventions in gender.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

Police officers are exposed to highly stressful situations that result in the determinant of health. Ramey, Downing, et al. (2012) examined how stress affects police officers mentally and physically. Ramey et al. revealed that police officer health deteriorated 1.7 times faster than the general population. Stress is the leading cause of health issues, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, weight gain, and substance use (Ramey et al., 2012). Although stress affects both genders, female officers respond to stress differently than male police officers. Both genders experience stress contrarily, suggesting that gender-specific programs may help to identify how males and females manage work and family stressors differently (Steinkopf, Hakala, & Van Hasselt, 2015). Male and female officers manage stress contrarily. Male officers deal with stress externally or through shared experiences, while females express through emotions (Robinson et al., 2014). The negative effects of work-related stress can result in health issues, loss of work, poor work performance, substance use, and family issues (Ramey et al., 2012).

There are a number of quantitative studies on the effects of law enforcement work-related stress and gender. However, more qualitative research is needed to determine if there is a difference in reported characteristics and level of job-related stress between the genders. Many programs are similar in the way that training is provided to combat job-related stress. Males and females encounter and handle stressful situations

differently (Barratt, Bergman, & Thompson, 2014). Training programs offered should be tailored to fit the officers' needs when indicated that is specific to genders, in which to reduce stress levels through appropriate education and training.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The initial literature review began with a search of library databases within the Walden University's Library. Extensive data searches were conducted to find articles regarding police officers. Supplementary searches included varied wording of the following search terms: *patrol, law enforcement, police officer, gender, male, female, stress, mental health, issues, wellness, programs, psychological, physiological, well-being, men, and women*. The peer-review search was set for a time period ranging from 2011 to 2016. The time period was set to identify relevant literature. The electronic database used for the search was EBSCO. Psychology databases used in the search included multidisciplinary, PsycArticles, psycINFO, Sage, SocINDEX, Google Scholar, and Science Citation Index. Multidisciplinary databases included Academic Search Complete, Thoreau, and Google Scholar. Dividing the terms in EBSCO databases produced 368 results; further separation of terms was needed to narrow the search. Of the 368 results, there were 344 peer-reviewed and 336 were academic journals. There were 109 categorized under police articles; 42 under stress, 18 gender, 10 burnout, 10 job stress, seven police officers, six work-life balance, and five were gender differences. The publication categories for police stress in genders included in the search were the seven from the *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, six from *Policing-an International*

*Journal of Police Strategies and Management*, four from *Policing: International Journal*, three from *International Nursing*, and three from *Police Practice and Research*.

### **Resiliency Theory**

Based on the resiliency theory, a person has the ability to adjust to stressful situations, such as work, personal, and family. De Terte and Stephens (2014) explained resiliency theory as an adaptation process when a person is faced with life's challenges. Police officers are faced with work-related stressors during their shifts and sometimes after. Often these work-related stressors are transferred to another person and or family life. Because stress is a significant part of a police officer's job, health issues often arise. Exposure to excessive stress over time can lead to mental and physical problems. In some cases, substance usage begins or increases due to excessive job-related stress. Police work is stressful because of the exposure to human lewdness and suffering, suspicious and occasional hostile environment, shift changes, extended periods of monotony, and existent danger (Frank, Lambert, & Qureshi, 2017). The research problem compared stress between the genders and work performances in police officers. Prior research was conducted on what created stress and treatment that decreased anxiety, such as education, relaxation techniques, meditation, reducing the frequency of shift rotation, diet, and promoting wellness programs (Robinson et al., 2014). Resilience theory refers to the strengths that individuals and organizations exhibit with which to empower and overcome difficulty (Frank et al., 2017). This can be accomplished in the police field through education and tools to help decrease risk factors associated with job-related

stresses. Decreasing risk factors would include minimizing shift hours and overtime and offering incentives and wellness programs to encourage healthy habits.

### **Gender in Work Performance**

There are few qualitative studies on stress in gender and work performances affecting sleep and work-family relationships. A gap in the literature suggested the need for examination in qualitative studies of gender and its relationship to stress in job performances, sleep experiences, and family life (see Hassell et al., 2011). Qualitative approaches are often perceived as sensitive due to the personal nature regarding a narrative approach. It allows the individual or in this case, the police officer, to tell his or her own story (see Creswell, 2013). The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine stressors affecting job performances of male and female police officers.

Menard and Arter (2014) conducted a study on police officers' work stressors in the two genders. The study revealed that each gender experienced and coped with stress differently. Both genders' work-related stress resulted in a decreased psychological defense and coping mechanisms (Menard & Arter, 2014). Such stressors specific to female police officers include prejudice, adverse attitudes, oppositional responses, lack of mentoring, demands to substantiate themselves, and being outcast by other police officers, social networks, and families (Menard & Arter, 2014). Female police officers are less likely to report maltreatment than male police officers (Menard & Arter, 2014). Regardless of gender differences, coping strategies are essential during stressful encounters (Menard & Arter, 2014).

### **Effects of Work-related Stress in Police Officers**

Fear, Seddon, Jones, Greenberg, and Wessely (2012) revealed how the effects of reporting including stereotyping, compensation time taken, and or the loss of families and careers resulted in negative consequences. Although both genders are exposed to similar stress, male and female officers experience and handle the stress in a different way.

Robinson et al. (2014) examined how male and female handle stress. The study revealed that male officers dealt with stress externally or through shared experiences, while females expressed stress through emotions.

Female officers often deal with added stress. Recent studies showed female police officers had more reported health issues that included metabolic syndrome, stress, hypercholesterolemia, and diabetes (Violanti et al., 2016). Women officers reported increased stress from exposure to tragedies and persistent danger to self and fellow officers (Violanti et al., 2016). Female police officers compared to male police officers also reported stress from gossip among their fellow officers pertaining to them (Violanti et al., 2016).

Although male police officers experience similar job stressors as females, other factors influenced work-related stress. In a study male police officers reported an increased stress in the relationship with co-workers, department size, and minimal training to be more stressful (Violanti et al., 2016). The criminal-justice system produces further stress among male police officers. Male police officers are recognized for managing job stress through retrogression, anger, temper, and petulance. Male police



officers, when compared to female police officers, also reported higher stress due to public police condemnation, court duty, politics within the department, and second job work (Violanti et al., 2016). Nonetheless, these results of the study are varied (Violanti et al., 2016).

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Qualitative Research**

There are many studies on police officer's work-related stress and genders. However, there are little qualitative research studies conducted on the issues. Qualitative studies are an important contribution to under-researched areas involving the effects of stress has on work performances in genders, health problems, and family (Robinson et al., 2014). These problems are often obtained by surveys guided by the participant's attitudes and actual behavior in the interviews. The interviews reflect the work and life histories of the police officers. Qualitative research encompasses a variety of methods to include: research design, methodological approach, data collection, analysis, and validity (Creswell, 2013). The results represent a well-developed, systematic qualitative study. Theoretical framework conducted by the researcher supports, prophecy and cognizes phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

The research problem compared work-related stress between gender and work performance in police officers. Research conducted prior examined the causes generating stress and treatment to reduce anxiety, such as, education, relaxation techniques, meditation, reducing frequency of shift rotation, diet, and promoting wellness programs

(Robinson et al., 2014). A qualitative narrative approach was the conceptual framework determined for this study. Creswell (2013) suggested the method used to plan the course of action for the research or to represent a course of action regarding an idea or an assumption and proposes that the research understands the objective. The objective for this study was to understand the differences genders in police officers' work-related stress.

## **Literature Review**

### **Gender and Family**

Females are need in law enforcement because they bring a set of distinctive skills to the profession. Barratt, Bergman, and Thompson (2014) examined the roles of female police officers play in law enforcement. The set skills female police officers bring to the law enforcement profession include problem resolving techniques; social skills; and conflict resolution needed to create a diverse partnership in the policing field. Barratt et al. (2014) provided an in-depth study of how gender influenced societal projects impacting work performances and perspectives through mentoring, psychosocial mentoring, and role modeling. The study examined how policing was stereotyped as a masculine job suggesting women officers were weaker counterparts. Law enforcement agencies need to re-evaluate equality and diversity among gender. Policing is no longer considered a masculine field for men; however, an equal opportunity and profession for genders. The study revealed how stereotyping male and female roles are a significant problem in gender orientation, mentoring, and job duties resulting in stressors. Thus, the

study needs to provide valid information regarding the differences in gender-related stressors that are influenced by masculinity and feminist roles.

Female police officers mentor differently than male police officers. Barratt et al. (2014) revealed that sexual orientation roles were observed by interaction among masculine, feminine, and sexual orientation. The study concluded that career mentoring and role modeling was influenced by masculinity and femininity the law enforcement roles. The analysis indicated that masculine female genders received added occupation mentoring than non-masculine females.

More female police officers are need in the roles of mentors. Barratt et al. (2014) provided insight regarding gender role orientation and the attitude of the mentors in law enforcement. The study indicated that masculinity characteristics received more from their mentors than feminine characteristics in female police officers (Barratt et al., 2014). Police mentors should be based on job performance characteristics regardless of gender. Charlesworth and Robertson (2012) investigated a case resulting in the resistance of part-time work in an Australia police department. This particular study investigates gender discrimination in the Victoria Police department. Charlesworth and Robertson provide insight on how limited access to part-time work was linked to a greater attrition of female officers compared to males in law enforcement. Part-time employees in the study were mostly female police officers. Part-time police officers reported bias in managers and peer's perception by being unaccommodating and indignant because of their limited work availability. Both male and female officers reported stress was a result of shift work and

long hours. The study indicated that part time officers were not compensated due to their part time status. Reported work stressors in the study included: being passed up for promotions, upgrades, and career development (Charlesworth & Robertson, 2012).

The study provided an in-depth research internal review of the Victoria Police department's full-time police officer opportunities compared to part time police officers. The project examined organizational scan, unequivocally investigating issues pertaining to part-time employees and an internal part-time employee review. Charlesworth and Robertson (2012) used three main vehicles when comparing resistance in part-time police work included: limited access to part time work, instructional barriers, and the use of cultural stereotypes. The study showed fewer opportunities for part-time employees to advance due to status and gender. The analysis indicated part time police officers were not given the opportunity for further training or educational classes. There was a negative stereotype for the female gender meaning they were unsuitable for a policing job.

There was a significant bias throughout the study. The attitudes of the participants indicated men were superior compared to women influenced by culture and area (Charlesworth & Robertson, 2012). The results from the interview revealed that both genders believed policing was for the male gender (Charlesworth & Robertson, 2012). The study revealed how informal or privileged practices in law enforcement applied to the male gender. While both genders were analyzed, the males were predominantly favored in the study. For this study, there were equal male to female participants interviewed.

Police officers are subjected to significant stress on the job. Often, the stress flows over into family life. Gachter, Savage, and Torgler (2011) conducted a study to investigate gender differences, stress levels, and gender-specific sensitivities in law enforcement. Further studies are needed to determine if there are differences in stressful environmental situations in regard to gender. The study included on the job and family environmental factors that included: unit cooperation, partner trust, work-life balance, home stability and interactional fairness. The effects of stressors and strains in the different gender while exposed to significant physical and emotional stress proved to be indifferent. Stress affects both genders in law enforcement. The findings concluded that there were no differences in the amount of psychological strain, overall strain, anxiety, depression and or burnout in the genders (Gachter et al., 2011). However, female police officers were perceived to have an increased effect on health, social capital importance and perception of on the work equality than male police officers (Gachter et al., 2011).

Previous studies have revealed that police officers are a predominantly male profession (Gachter et al., 2011). Gachter et al. (2011) provided insight on how gender plays a role in a male-dominated work force specific to law enforcement. Gachter et al. (2011) advocated that female police officers working in a male role reported stress as a result of family responsibilities, lower pay, longer hours, and less job satisfaction than male police officers. Female police officer reported more health issues as a result of work-related stresses. Conversely, females were more prone to physical and mental health issues resulting from higher workloads. Gachter et al. (2011) concluded that

primarily, gender was no mediating factor in work related stress, suggesting there was no statistical evidence indicating gender differences in strains such as, psychological strain, anxiety, depression, and burnout. The study provided data that reflect negative health impacts on gender differences in some ethnic groups. The significance of the study suggested that diversity should be equal regarding genders and ethnic. However, gender-specific programs are need in police departments to help decrease psychological stress and create balance on the job and home life. A limitation of the study suggested the age of the data used has changed several aspects, such as, law enforcement, social, and political assemblies in the United States.

Recognizing occupational-related resources of illness is perilous in the development of interventions that will reduce health risks in police agencies. Kim, Wells, Vardalis, Johnson and Lim (2016) conducted a study on gender differences in occupational stress. The study investigated the impact of job characteristics, organizational environment, and external environment has on genders in police officers. Kim et al. (2016) provided an analysis that showed male and female police officers handle work-related stress differently. The study evaluated camaraderie, negative work environment, and constructed coping mechanisms in the genders.

The results presented an increase in female police officers that may experience higher levels of somatization and anxiety than male police officers (Kim et al., 2016). The analysis also disclosed that organizational bureaucracy impacts both male and female officer's somatization and anxiety (Kim et al., 2016). However, the males were

manifested by depression. The results of the study showed female police officers have a higher degree of somatization and marginally statistically significant higher degree of anxiety than males (Kim et al., 2016). The depression study compared differently, with males having a higher reported rate of depression (Kim et al., 2016). Results of the community relationships showed that male police officers were impacted on somatization, anxiety, and depression (Kim et al., 2016), while female officers were impacted only on anxiety and depression. Future studies need to be male and female proportioned (Kim et al., 2016). A limitation of this study suggests more male police officers and supervisors participated than females.

The study concluded that identify and autonomy on the different methods of work-related stressors vary between male and female police officers (Kim et al., 2016). The research provided explanations of each instrument used. Further research in this area would be useful in determining whether there are differences in gender related to these issues.

Burnout is often a result of work-related stresses in law enforcement among rank and gender. McCarty (2013) conducted a study to compare the levels and predictors of burnout between female and male sergeants at a large municipal law enforcement agency. Moving up the ranks in law enforcement comes with a hefty price, for example a heavier workload and more stress. The study wanted to gain insight in police supervision and ascertain prospects for improvement. The study examined reasons for burnout in supervisory positions. Work stress often goes unmanaged, resulting in burnout. Burnout

was the after mass of stress from job strain; feeling over whelmed, lack of energy, and hopeless in the stressful job setting. Mental health and physical health were reported to deteriorate when exposed to significant stress.

Work-related stress in policing often results in fatigue. Fatigue is an intuitively ensuing state of existence. However, it can manifest into the form of anxiety and depression when exposed to high stressful situations. McCarty (2013) examined two goals in a study on emotional exhaustion. The first goal was to determine if there were significant differences in the levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization described by female and male sergeants who reported emotional exhaustion one to two times a month (McCarthy, 2013). The depersonalization resulted indicated that females reported less emotional detachment than males in the work place. The second goal was to determine if predictors of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization differ significantly between male and female sergeants (McCarthy, 2013). The results showed that burnout was constant between female and male sergeants, with comparable characteristics, such as, work-life conflict and rapports with peers and supervisors (McCarty, 2013). Limitations of the study suggested the sample size was large and from one organization. Further research in this area is need using a longitudinal study in which to provided information regarding attitudes of the different genders.

The study concluded that although there are gender differences, both male and female sergeants experience difficulty with burnout. Future research is needed using more agencies in which to investigate smaller agencies and determine their attitudes



regarding burnout. This literature was relevant because it addresses gender, work stress, burnout, and the need to implement wellness programs in police departments.

Police officers are not the only one's affected by stress. Family members of police officers are often impacted. Kurtz (2012) examined the influences of gender and family factors on police stress. In Kurtz (2012) findings, public perception of police officers represents as one of the most stressful jobs. The study supported the literature suggesting that second shift is highly ranked as a source of stress for women officers. The study showed that second shift work in policing was a main source of stress for female officers. Women are less likely to work second shift due to family and spouse roles (Kurtz, 2012). Stressful jobs lead to stress, health issues, and negative behaviors for example risky behaviors and alcohol consumption (Kurtz, 2012). Non-violent work-related stressors were indicated as being shift work, time organization, and difficult physical requirements of the job (Kurtz, 2012).

Additional research of the study provided stress characteristic regarding genders in law enforcement. A cross tabulation and quantitative analysis was used for the study. The author utilized *The Police Stress and Domestic Violence in Police Families in Baltimore Maryland* for the study (Kurtz, 2012). The results concluded that second shift was still a stressor for female police officers. It also showed that female police officers typically experience high levels of stress, however, critical incidents did not notably vary between the genders (Kurtz, 2012).

Police officers' work stress is experienced differently in gender. The study concluded that female officers experience higher levels of stress, such as, family and home obligations (Kurtz, 2012). The literature indicated that female police officers are expected to uphold domestic responsibilities as a mother, wife, and caregiver. The study concluded that prior literature supports the negative influences of critical incidents on officer psychophysical stress levels (Kurtz, 2012). The study indicated that work environments are connected with the increases of stress in law enforcement. However, this particular study did not measure potential issues that could also influence police officers stress scores for example health and lifestyle issues. Empirical studies are needed to examine the relationship between of female roles and police roles.

Police officer's family and or personal relationships are impacted by work-related stresses. Karaffa, Openshaw, Koch, Clark, Harr, and Stewart (2015), investigated the impact police work has on marriages and families. The study evaluated how spouses of police officers reacted to their work-related stress in the home. Karaffa et al., (2015) suggested that police work stressors are often carried over into home life. Spouses and family members are often strained. The study suggests that police officers' marriages are exposed to risk factors, such as, job related stress, long hours, unconventional schedules, and mood changes of the officer. Police work stress exposure causes physical and emotional strain.

Family members of police officers expediting work-related stress should be included and provided with resources for support. Karaffa et al. (2015) conducted a study on police work and how it affects the family life. The purpose for the study was to identify the perceived degree of conflict in police marriages regarding several common concerns, perceived stressors or sources of support among officers and spouses, and utilization of both professional and nonprofessional resources to manage stress. The results showed two significant causes resulting in marital stresses, which were financial problems, and taking on an additional job to make ends meet (Karaffa et al., 2015). Family conflict is often a result of the police officer not spending enough or quality time with family as a result of job demands and extra job. Other factors for strained marriages indicated the lack of support from the police department and taking anger out on family members. Police officers are faced with added stress because of the lack of support regarding family and co-worker support from the organization. Qualitative research is needed to fully determine and understand how family life is impacted as a whole. There are limited empirical studies that assess spousal stress. Another limitation to the study was that lack of diverse participants (Karaffa et al., 2015). An ideal future study would suggest a more diverse group of participants. A weakness for the study was the authors were unable to generate a response rate for the study.

The study concludes that marriages and families are greatly impacted by stress as well as the police officer. Karaffa et al., (2015) suggested contributing factors conflicted with marital relationships were from occupational stress, organizational factors, work-

family conflict, personality changes, and domestic violence. This is another study to support and justifies stress management programs in the police departments.

### **Male vs. Female Police Officer Stance**

Police department need to address gender attitudes and stereotypes in law enforcement. Muftic and Collins (2014), analyzed gender attitudes of male police regarding integrated females in the Bosnia police department. The study revealed that there are still negative attitudes and traditional sexist views males have toward female police officers (Muftic & Collins, 2014). Attitudes in law enforcement should remain professional for male and female officers. Female police officers report increased stressor at work was due to stereotyping from male police officers (Barratt, Bergman, & Thompson, 2014). Training and education are needed in police departments to incorporate gender roles that included ethical. Professional practices would suggest that gender does not play a role in how the police officers are treated on the job.

The law enforcement profession needs to discourage the concept that police work is a male dominant field and female police officers are weak. Muftic and Collins (2014) discovered a correlation among attitudes regarding female police officers, work experiences and individual characteristics with male Bosnian police officers. In some countries such as Bosnian, women police officers are equal in job duties (Barratt et al., 2014). Future studies are needed to understand the influences of stressors among male and female police officers.

### **Stressors**

Poor sleep is another contributing factor in police stress. Allwood (2012) conducted the first study in decision-making styles and stress that included: Rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous (Allwood & Solo, 2012). The poor sleep stressors analyzed in the study were perceived stress and sleep quality (Allwood, 2012). There is a correlation between decision-making styles and sleep in which to help allocate better working environments specific to police officers. Work environments can be tailored, specific to each shift allowing for adequate sleep that would result in an increase in work performance, attitudes, and overall job satisfaction. Job performances can be influenced by the lack of sleep in police officers. Poor sleep quality results in negative job performance in both male and female police officers (Allwood, 2012). Further studies in work hours and overtime are need in this area to manage work-related stress affecting sleep in the different shifts. Police departments must develop better methods to manage work-related stress in the different shifts. Managed work-related stress improve the overall wellbeing and reducing negative outcomes. The authors concluded that avoidant style and dependent style were notably linked with higher perceived stress and worse sleep (Allwood & Solo, 2012).

Unhealthy coping skills are often used to deal with police stressors. Hakan Can and Hendy (2014) conducted a study examining how exposure to police stressors was associated with increased risk for physical, psychological and interpersonal negative outcomes. Hakan Can and Hendy (2014) wanted to ascertain healthy and unhealthy coping mechanisms associated with police stressors and negative outcomes. The study

determined if there was a way to reduce the issues associated with work stressors, such as, health risks, low self-esteem, and partner and police aggression. The study provided an in-depth analysis of a variety of stressful scenarios that increase negative responses in police officers. The results showed that police officers use unhealthy methods for dealing with stress, revealing that anger was mostly used for coping with stressors. Future studies are needed to include if there are gender differences in coping and management of work-related stressors in police work.

Stress management programs are needed to help police officers manage work-related stressors. Hakan Can and Hendy (2014) conclude the need to implement anger-managed and for anger expressed skill programs to aide in positive outcomes. A limitation of the study was that the participants were male, Caucasian officers. Diversity was a weakness in the study. Other limitations suggested the variables used for the study was unclear as to which one was associated with negative outcomes. The variables included: health problems, low self-esteem, and partner and police aggression (Hakan Can & Hendy, 2014). This study supports my ideal that work-related stress impacts police officers' lives.

A police officer's workday is not typical. A police officer prepares for his or her workday upon awaking. Hickman, Fricas, Strom, and Pope (2011) conducted a study in describe an innovated approach to study police stress. The study reveals another component in a police officer's workday. The study argued that critical incidents are not the only source of stress in a police officer's daily work duties. However, acute stress was

the result total activity time during the parole officer's routine shift. The study revealed that in a police officer's ordinary workday, contributing occupational stress factors, such as, potential for violence on a call, injury, death and the release of stress hormones.

Hickman et al. (2011) suggested all these factors contribute to police work stress.

The study consisted of three goals. Hickman et al. (2011) first goal was to focus on real-time measurement of psychological response using the effects of heart rate and dispatch. The second goal provided a basic explanation about the psychological stress related to workdays of the police officer. The third goal was to support valid testing of research hypothesis in criminal and general strained theories. The study put these goals to test. The results in determining the methodology of the study, volunteers were used as participants (Hickman et al., 2011). The police administrators need to re-evaluate old policies on police stress. New polices are need to incorporate convergent factors that lead to officer stress. Police stress management programs need to be written with an understanding of how the environment impacts work and coping mechanisms used to deal with that stress. It is also imperative to understand how stress is influenced and if it varies between genders.

The study concluded that researchers and police administrators should have a better understanding of actual stressors that encompass an officer's routine workday (Hickman et al., 2011). There is a need for law enforcement administrators to address the compound issues that lead to officer work-related stresses. This study provided additional insight on how stress in police work is not defined by one crisis call, but the shift works

entirely. Stress management programs need to be part of every law enforcement agency. Police stress management programs can learn the conflicting effect of work environment and coping skills on police stress.

Evening and night shift work in policing was reported as the main source of stress for female officers. Kurtz (2012) examined the influences of gender and family factors on police stress. In Kurtz (2012) findings, public perception of police officers represents as one of the most stressful jobs. The study supports the literature suggesting that second shift is highly ranked as a source of stress for women officers. Women are less likely to want to work second shift due to family and spouse roles (Kurtz, 2012). Stressful jobs lead to stress, health issues, and negative behaviors for example risky behaviors and alcohol consumption. Non-violent work-related stressors were indicated as being shift work, time organization, and difficult physical requirements of the job (Kurtz, 2012). The study provided additional research on stress characteristic regarding genders in law enforcement.

Kurtz (2012) concluded that female officers experienced higher levels of stress, such as, family and home obligations. Female police officers experience and respond to stress differently their counterparts. The literature indicated that female police officers are expected to uphold domestic responsibilities as a mother, wife, and caregiver (Kurtz, 2012). The study also identified with prior literature supporting the negative influences of critical incidents on officer psychophysical stress levels. The study indicated that work environments are connected with the increases of stress in law enforcement (Kurtz,



2012). Potential issues, such as, health and lifestyle influences are needed to be included in future studies in police officer gender. Empirical studies are needed to examine the relationship between of female roles and police roles.

Maran, Varetto, Zedda, & Ieraci (2015) conducted a study that looked at stress between Italian male and female patrol police officers by using a quali-quantitative survey. The purpose of the study was to examine anxious and perceived stress and explore the effects, as well as, the use of coping strategies by police officers in regards to gender (Maran et al., 2014). Qualitative literature is needed to help in the re-structuring of wellness programs in police departments to help understand and combat stress in gender. The study looked at where stress comes from, consequences that may occur, and coping strategies by police officers. Police officers experience stress in their daily jobs. Stress is also handled differently by males and females police officers. In some situations, stress is not handled well by the police officer resulting in problems in mental and physical problems. Female police officers tend to internalize stress. Male police officers often handle stress externally (Menard & Arter, 2014). Regardless, stress was handled using poor coping skills. The study provided an in-depth analysis of organizational and operational stressors in the police officer genders (Maran et al., 2014). The results of the study indicated both genders views were self-critical with views of professional and contextual circumstances with filtered pessimism and self-blame, and a greater level of somatization and psychological distress in female officers, internal support, lack of

recognition of professional skills, and equality. Stress management programs can aid in building rapport with genders (Maran et al., 2014).

As stated before, stress is an inescapable part of a police officer's career. The study concluded that both genders have common stressors. Male and female police officers have different sources of stress. The study suggested that women use emotional-focused strategies to deal with stress, while men use problem-focused strategies (Maran et al., 2014). Women police officers are stereotyped as being the weaker gender. Females were perceived in the study as weaker because of being subjected to prejudices and gender and expectation of work roles, lack of internal support, lack of recognition of professional skills, and equality. Stress management programs specific to gender are needed to help building rapport and trust in police departments.

Stress can negatively affect a police officer's work performance. Odunayo, Austines, and Kolowole (2015) evaluated stress type and death anxiety as predictors of job performance among some police personnel in Lagos State. Police officers are faced with challenging situations during shifts, such as, traumatic events and the fear of dying. The study reported that police officers in Nigeria were faced with stressful situations due to not being prepared, inadequately compensated, and unmotivated when confronted with life-threatening situations (see Odunayo et al., 2015). The study's substantial research showed that there was significant organizational stress due to policies and practices of police officers. Odunayo et al. (2015) recognized the organizational stressors officers experience on the job. The stressors included: low wages, lack of training, inadequate

equipment, shift work, the absence of administrative support, and poor rapport with supervisors and coworkers. The results of the study showed that police organizational and operational stress, and death anxiety accounted for substantial variation in the perceptions of performance. The study revealed stress had a greater negative impact on relationship with perceptions of performance (Odunayo et al., 2015). Police organizational stress had a substantial weaker positive relationship with performance (Odunayo et al., 2015). However, there was no significant difference perceived in the observation of performance regarding gender with police officers. More qualitative studies are needed in which to show how male and female police officer experience and handle anxiety on the job. Some of the data was subjective in nature, which could have been interpreted as a weakness in the study. Future qualitative studies would not be interpreting the results; however, allowing the police officers to tell about their experiences.

The study concluded that stress and death anxieties were negative influences that could possibly have an opposing effect on views of job performance levels of the common police officers (Odunayo et al., 2015). Future studies are needed in the area of examining roles that perceive self-efficacy have regarding relationships.

According to Lucas, Weidner, and Janisse (2012) work stress comes from analyzing stress in police officers. The study applied the generalizability theory to identify and associate causes of variance in stress related to the work of police officers. Stress causes significant anxieties in police officers resulting in physical and mental health problems. Lucas et al. (2012) provided insight on the potential risks associated

with police officer work. The study also provides evidence on how these stressors impact police officer's mental and physical health. Substantial amounts of stress affect the wellbeing of police officers and calls in for sick days. The study focused on variance components that correlate with work stress in a single occupational setting that concentrated on police officers and their set of work-related stressors (Lucas et al., 2012).

Certain stressor corresponded to police officers gender resulting in different outcomes of mental and physical health. Lucas et al. (2012) concluded in the study revealed distinct stressor characteristics and individual differences correlated with each mixed element involved the officer x stressor collaborations were compared to officers decreased neuroticism, elevated neurotic officers provided low primary appraisal rating of stressors that were typically seen as less threatening, and high primary appraisal ratings of stressors that were perceived as serious (Lucas et al., 2012). Future research conducted may explore variance structure of stressors regarding other work settings that includes all participants.

According to Menard and Arter (2014), gender differences and the effects of experimental and social stressors, as well as, negative coping skills on alcohol issues and posttraumatic stress symptoms with an international sample of police officers. Police officers are exposed to high levels of stress and critical incidents as part of their daily jobs. Menard and Arter (2014) provided an in-depth analysis of male and female officers experiencing stress from critical incidents, social stressors, and coping on usage of alcohol, and posttraumatic stress disorder in male and female police officers. The study

concluded that there was need to accommodate the mental and physical health issues associated with work stress in the police department. There is little support from administration and the public resulting in criticism and stigmas in police departments. Programs are needed to help police understand stress, how it affects them, and utilizes intervention techniques to decrease symptoms (Menard & Arter, 2014). Future studies are needed to support the implantation of preventive programs to help with stressors, and mental and physical health issues. Menard and Arter (2014) used self-reporting surveys in the study. Self-reporting surveys can be used in police departments to help understand and begin to develop a plan in which to minimize work-related stresses.

### **Sleep Issues**

One of the major complaints in police officers' stressors was a sleep disturbance. Neylan, Metzger, Henn-Haase, Blank, Tarasovsky, McCaslin, Lenoci, & Marmar (2010) conducted an in-depth study on the effects of prior night sleep duration associated with psychomotor vigilance in a healthy sample of police academy recruits. The study examined how sleep disorders impact work performances resulting in fatigue-related errors. Neylan et al. (2010) provided an in-depth study on the impact of sleep disruptions and work schedules given the strict consequences of making fatigue-related mistakes by police officers. Neylan et al. (2010) used mixed-effects logistic regression to estimate the probability. The results indicated that overall probability of having a lapse decreased by 0.9 percent when wakening, holding hours of continuous sleep (see Neylan et al., 2010).

Interrupted sleep or no sleep affects a police officer's work performance and decision making. The study showed that sleep deprivation could have a negative impact on performances in police officers (Neylan et al., 2010). The results indicated that sleep loss opens for the potential to make mistakes. In the realm of police work, errors can result in injury and death, which can be eliminated with the appropriate amount of sleep.

Hormones in the body also play a part in sleep and anxiety. Wirth, Burch, Violanti, Burchfiel, Fekedulegn, Andrew, Zhang, Miller, Hebert, and Vena (2011) examined the effects of Cortisol had on awakening response in police officers working short and long shifts. Wirth et al. (2011) explains the how this hormone affects police officer's health. Shift work durations influence health issues which included: sleep patterns, psychological stress, depression, suicide, metabolic issues, heart disease, diabetes, and increased mortality (Wirth et al., 2011). Psychological effects developed due to the increase of depressive symptoms resulting from working different shifts.

Shift work can play a role in the police officers work performance. Wirth et al. (2011) explained the effects of high levels of Cortisol also take a toll on other occupations with similar work shift schedules. The study consisted of 100 participants form Buffalo's New York Police Department. The study compiled the results indicated that Cortisol levels were lower among night or afternoon shift workers when compared to police officers working days (Wirth et al., 2011). The study also indicated that time x shift work formula showed no statistical significance for this study. Overall, the study revealed that there is no one contributor for health issues occurring in police officers due

to shift work (Wirth et al., 2011). Many factors contribute to the development of disease because of the nature of working in high-risk situations. The comparison of previous studies indicated that the conditions might not have been the same as the study that was currently being conducted. The data obtained in previous studies may have been obtained under different conditions, such as, potential shift differences, hours worked, times, and schedules (Wirth et al., 2011). Strength of the literature was that it is the first study to characterizes biomarkers of stress, subclinical cardiovascular disease, body composition, and psychological symptoms concerning high-risk jobs (Wirth et al., 2011). Limitations of the study suggested covariate information was not included, such as, tobacco usage, coffee, or alcohol usage (Wirth et al., 2011). The use of substances can also play a factor in sleep and overall wellness of the police officer. When conducting a study, all factors must be included to account for accuracy.

The study concluded that the data on contributing factors shift work has on police officer's overall health (Wirth et al., 2011). Future research is need to help provide an in-depth and valid data on the characteristics stress has on police officers due to work-shift durations. The study also used male and female participants for the study allowing views from both male and female genders.

Vargas de Barros, Martins, Saitz, & Basto (2012) conducted a study on mental health conditions, individual and job characteristics and sleep disturbances among firefighter. The purpose for the study was to assess the correlation among mental health conditions, individual and job characteristics and sleep disturbances firefighters. Critical

incidents affect the sleep of police officers. Vargas de Barros et al. (2012) wanted to ascertain contributing factors that cause sleep disturbances among firefighters. The results indicated psychological distress and psychosomatic disturbances were greatly correlated with sleep disturbances (Vargas de Barros et al., 2012).

The study concluded that the results might have been associated with psychological and physical hazards of the job (Vargas de Barros et al., 2012). The study indicated that sleep disturbances are significant and impede on firefighter's health. The literature in this study was directed toward firefighters. The study was relevant because police officers also experience the same type of sleep distress due to job stressors.

Police officers have an image of being tough and often do not seek help for psychological and physical issues. According to Rajaratnam, Barger, Lockley, Shea, Wang, Landrigan, O'Brien, Quadri, Sullivan, Cade, Epstein, White, and Czeisler (2011), sleep disorders, health, and safety in police officers often go undiagnosed and untreated. These sleep disorders can ultimately cause health and safety issues. Sleep disorders can negatively impact a police officer's decision-making skills.

Sleep problems were another reported concern for police officers. Rajaratnam et al. (2011) examined sleep disorders in police officers in a massive study. There were 4,957 participants from North America who completed a baseline survey. The online survey consisted of demographics, physical and mental health status, and sleep disturbance risk factors. A second follow-up survey was sent to participants inquiring about work related performances, work hours, and safety issues (see Rajaratnam et al.,



2011). The results indicated 40.4 percent of the participants screened positive for a sleep disorder (Rajaratnam et al., 2011). Sleep issues were reported to be a significant contributor for stress in police officers. The study reported 33.6 percent who screened positive for obstructive sleep apnea, 6.5 percent had moderate to severe insomnia, 5.4 percent for shift work disorder, and 14.5 percent who worked nights (Rajaratnam et al., 2011). The study revealed that 28.5 percent of firefighters reported excessive sleepiness, while 26.1 reported falling asleep while driving once in a month (Rajaratnam et al., 2011). Sleep issues can lead to health issues resulting in chronic illness.

The study concluded that sleep disorders are common in North American police officers. Sleep disorders correlated with the increase of self-reporting opposing health issues, work performances and safety outcomes (Rajaratnam et al., 2011). Ramey et al. (2012) found that work stressors lead to abnormal circadian rhythm. Shift work affected police work performance and sleep resulting in poor eating habits (Ramey et al., 2012). In another study on sleep, Wirth et al. (2011) argued that shift work resulted in an overload of Cortisol. Cortisol is produced in the body as a result of stress. This was another interesting read to supporting the importance of sleep in police officers.

Sleep problems from shift changes can develop into more serious health issues. Ramey, Perkhounkova, Moon, Budde, Tseng, and Clark (2012) conducted a study that examined the effects of work shift and sleep duration on various aspects of police officers' health. The study explored the correlation between shift work, sleep, and wellness regarding police officers. There were high risk factors associated with sleep

loss, such as, weight gain and obesity. Research supports the theory that sleep quantity and quality play a major in negative health consequences, such as, obesity, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. The study examined the impact sleep has on police officers (Ramey et al., 2012). There were 85 male police officers from Iowa who agreed to the survey. The survey consisted of querying regarding sleep duration and quality, stress, and vital exhaustion (Ramey et al., 2012). Height, weight, BMI, and blood were also obtained comparing evening and night shift police officers. The results revealed that evening and night shift officers reported less than six hours of sleep a night compared to days (Ramey et al., 2012). This was an indicator for poor quality of sleep due to the amount of sleep per day, which was 14.27 percent (Ramey et al., 2012). The overall risk for poor sleep quality in officers sleeping less than six hours a day was 2.44 percent (Ramey et al., 2012). Limitations in the study were the self-reporting sleep data, the direction of causality among variables was not part ascertained, and officers with known health issue did not partake in the study. Further research in this area is needed to address the affects and differences in sleep problems among genders in police officers.

The study concluded that a vast number of police officers are at risk for health issues due to shift work and the quality and quantity of sleep (Ramey et al., 2012). Further studies are need in to examine the effects of a multivariate analysis that includes direct and indirect influences of variables, such as, smoking, physical activity, age, and diet (Ramey et al., 2012).

Sleep deprivation can affect work performance in police offices. Duffy, Zitting, and Czeisler, (2015), conducted an in-depth study on sleep denervation, chronic insufficient sleep, untreated sleep disorders, circadian timing disruptions, as well as, other health and safety concerns regarding transportation operators. The study provided insight provided by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration report administered the National Survey of Distracted and Drowsy Driving to their transportation operators (Duffy et al., 2015). The results showed an astounding percent of drivers falling asleep while working (Duffy et al., 2015).

Sleep deprivation is one of the common causes of work-related injuries and even death in police officers. Many police officers lose sleep due to shift changes; mandated overtime; call in of other officers and the lack of coverage. The study provided additional information regarding work related stress affecting sleep and functioning. Duff et al. (2015) provided insight provided by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration report administered the National Survey of Distracted and Drowsy Driving to their transportation operators (Duffy et al., 2015). The results showed that more than 40 percent of transportation drivers reported have fallen asleep at least once while driving. Of that 40 percent, eight percent reported falling asleep in the previous six months (Duffy et al., 2015). The study was conducted by the NHTSA, indicated that 7.5 million drivers nod off while driving each month (Duffy et al., 2015). Further research is needed to measure fatigue, driving drowsy among different groups, and sleep disruptions. Further screening and valid test on are need for treatment and intervention.

The study concluded that sleep inadequacy can result in significant consequences for transportation workers (Duffy et al., 2015). The study revealed that sleep deprivation is a result from the number hours worked; shift work, schedules, medication, undiagnosed sleep disorders, and personal choice to limit sleep (Duffy et al., 2015). Future policy changes can be implemented to incorporate tools like the Comprehensive Fatigue Management Plan. The plan can be utilized and explain how to identify, evaluate, implement, and review risk factors for fatigue. This can prove to be useful in assessing police officers for sleep disturbances.

### **Health**

Inadequate sleep often results in negative and long-term effects on police officer's health. Wolkow, Ferguson, Aisbett, and Main (2015), reviewed and critiqued the effects of sleep has on hormones, as well as, inflammatory and psychological stress responses. Through peer review literature, the study determined if quality and quantity of sleep were a common problem for emergency personnel and if it negatively affected functioning psychologically and physiologically (Wolkow et al., 2015). Inadequate sleep was classified by quality and quantity and the correlation between sleep constraint and negative long-term physical and mental health results (Wolkow et al., 2015). The study provided a critiqued literature review on the effects of work-related sleep restriction in emergency personnel (Wolkow et al., 2015). The author's in this review included police, fire fighters, defense forces and emergency personnel. Wolkow et al. (2015) reviewed literature pertaining to the psycho-physiological approach associated with sleep,

hormones, inflammatory and psychological responses effects of work-related stress and sleep disturbances. A limitation for the study concluded the lack of statistical analyses between psychological and physiological interactions regarding examining sleep restrictions (Wolkow et al., 2015). Future research in this area can provide a better understanding by using a larger range of emergency agencies and utilizing valid methods to measure sleep, psychological and psychological health pertaining to work related stress in exposed personnel (Wolkow et al., 2015).

Further research is need in the area of psycho-physiological approach in regards to placing in context, the impact of acute stress response to sleep restrictions in emergency personnel by using self-reported measurements. Psychological assessment combined with the self-reporting measurements can provide a more accurate image of how stress affects that particular person (Wolkow et al., 2015). Wolkow et al. (2015) study supports future studies on work related stress that affects sleep patterns causing other health issues. However, the study did not conclude how night shift personnel's stress and sleep patterns or gender differences.

Police officers are also exposed to organizational stressors. Organizational stressors are associated with long work hours, rotation shifts, poor public image, and administrative structure. Tyagi and Dhar (2014) conducted a study to assess the effects of stress has on police officers. The study determined how work stress affected police officer's wellbeing. The article revealed two types of pressures police officers were exposed which included internal or organizational politics (OP) and external influences

or perceived organization support (POS). Organizational stress often contributes to the inability for the police officer to maintain work and social balance. The study explained that internal pressures were role conflict and relationships among ranks, resistance to change, communication issues, lack of resources, and the political aspects in the police department. The external pressures were exposure to high-risk situations on the job, dealing with victims, high incident exposure, threats, and shift changes. The police officer's workload, such as overtime, was also reviewed during the study. The study suggested these pressures were all risk factors contributing to work related stress affecting health in the police officers.

A police officer's daily workload often results in daily overload. The result of the study showed stress was significant in the areas of organizational politics and work overload (Tyagi & Dhar, 2014). Stated organization support had a divergent correlation to stress (Tyagi & Dhar, 2014). Weakness of the study suggested the location of the study and the lack of police officers. Future studies need to ensure equal males to females. Significance of this study was constant with the need for more police officers to decrease work overload, more resources, and training to decrease stress over all. Educational programs in time management are need in police departments to help balance workdays.

McCanlies, Slaven, Smith, Andrew, Charles (2012) assessed metabolic syndrome and sleep duration in police officers. The study determined if there was correlation between sleeps issues and metabolic regulation, suggesting that sleep issues may cause metabolic abnormalities. The study investigated if metabolic syndrome or metabolic

syndrome components were associated with sleep quality (McCanlies et al., 2012). There are five components that make up metabolic syndrome: abnormal obesity, elevated triglycerides, decreased high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, high blood pressure, and increased fasting glucose (McCanlies et al., 2012). The study concluded that a conformation of metabolic syndrome, the participant has to have three of the five abnormalities.

There are a significant number of police officers that report symptoms of fatigue and tiredness affecting work performance. McCanlies et al. (2012) conducted the study using 98 participants, who were police officers from Buffalo, NY. Of the 98 participants, 39 were female and 59 were male experiencing metabolic syndrome components and sleep problems. Data was obtained by health information, self-reported, and basic demographic information (McCanlies et al., 2012). The results of the study indicated that metabolic syndrome and the components are not associated with the duration of sleep (McCanlies et al., 2012). The results also indicated that low HDL propelled sleep in females with metabolic syndrome.

The study determined that the sample size, study design, and the population selected for the study. A larger sample size for this particular study with a variety of populations may have produced different results (McCanlies et al., 2012). A longitudinal analysis would provide more data and clarity regarding the correlation between sleep duration and metabolic syndrome components in the genders (McCanlies et al., 2012). This study provided data on sleep problems and genders in police officers.

Police officers' work performance is affected by sleep disruptions due to extended work time. Bell, Virden, Lewis and Cassidy (2015) conducted a lengthy study totaling nine-months compared police officers working twelve hour and ten-hour shifts. The Bell et al. (2015) completed a nine-month study of two precincts at the Phoenix Police Department. The study examined the impact of extended work hours have on police officer's sleep, cognitive abilities, health, life quality, and performance working twelve-hour shifts.

Different shifts have an effect on the mental and physical health of the police officer. The study provided a lengthy and detailed explanation comparing sleep, cognition, health, life, and performance of police officers working long shifts (Bell et al., 2015). The study also compared day and night shift. It concluded that police officers working 13:20 hour shifts experienced more issues concerning sleep, fatigue, function, and re-action time (Bell et al., 2015). There were 343 participants selected from two different precincts in Phoenix (Bell et al., 2015). The 10-hour control consisted of 180/197 participants. The 13:20 hour precinct consisted of 163/189 participants (Bell et al., 2015). Neither control precinct indicated differences in gender, service time on force, number of children living at home or away, number of sleep medication, or ethnicity of police officers participating in the study. The tools tests used in the study included: the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index, Psychomotor Vigilance Test, STROOP Color-Word test, Quality of Life Inventory, and saliva cortisol measurements (Bell et al., 2015). The data was obtained over a six-month period and measured twice to examining any changes or



inconsistencies in pre and post measurements. Limitations for this study of the characteristics of the officers varied at the two control precincts. The varied characteristics included: different ages, gender differences, years on force, and number and age of children at home. The characteristic differences had some influence on the results. Another limitation was the six months was not long enough for the trial period resulting in statistical differences.

The study concluded that police officers provide services requiring high performance, level of functioning, and sound decision-making skills (Bell et al., 2015). This study provides valid data supporting my study suggesting the importance of maintaining ideal health conditions are essential in police officer's ability to perform their jobs accurately and effectively. When officers are entering their work shift exhausted, there is a high risk for mistakes. In the police realm, mistakes can be costly (Bell et al., 2015). Inappropriately handled stress and fatigue can result in mental and physical strain. This study supports the idea that over extended workdays and weeks set up risk factors for poor work functions. The significance of the article supports the ideal of longer workdays resulted in an increase of fatigue in all police officers. Police officers who experienced substantial fatigue presented with more physical and mental complaints. Hence, longer hours in high stress jobs result in negative effects in the wellbeing of police officers.

Police officers are at risk for minor and long-term illnesses. Ramey, Downing, Franke, Perkhounkova, and Alasagheirin (2012) examined the chronic stress and the

inflammatory biological markers in police officers. Research data has been gathered over the past five decades on stress and cardiovascular disease in policing (Ramey et al., 2012). Long-term exposure to job-related stress can result in serious health problems. Ramey et al., (2012) discovered a connection between work-related stress and high risk for cardiovascular disease. The study examined risk factors resulting from cardiovascular disease to include physical inactivity, hypercholesterolemia, hypertension, tobacco use, obesity and hyperinsulinemia (Ramey et al., 2012). Stress management strategies need to be implemented in the training of new and seasoned officers. Ramey et al., (2012) discovered that police officers are exposed to critical incident stressors and organizational stressors. Critical incident stressors experienced by the police officer were exposure to traumatic and violent situations (Ramey et al., 2012). Organizational stressors were described as extended work hours; shift work; negative public image; and management structure (Ramey et al., 2012). Occupational stress was ranked higher than critical stress because it involved job strain; an imbalance between job demands; job control; and inadequate reward system relative to productivity and conduct (Ramey et al., 2012).

The study concluded that understanding the effects of stress on biological permits medical personnel to pursue interventions that promote wellness before the disease process begins (Ramey et al., 2012). Further studies are needed to determine if gender plays a role in stress related health problems.

Substance use among police officers was another contributing factor as a result of work-related stressors. Chopko, Palmieri, and Adams (2013) found an association

between police stress and alcohol use among police officers. Substance use in police officers was referenced to the use of tobacco, alcohol and recreational drugs. The study discovered a connection between alcohol use and work-related traumatic stress, occupational stress, personal relationship stress and posttraumatic stress disorder avoidance symptoms (Chopko et al., 2013). There are still a significant number of police officers that do not seek help for job-related stress. Chopko et al., (2013) identified the leading causes of stress in law enforcement such as, organizational stressors, traumatic experiences, and personal relationships. The purpose for the study was to examine how much alcohol was consumed because of stress with job duties, age, and depression to be determining factors (Chopko et al., 2013). The participants were one hundred ninety-three active duty police officers in the Midwest states. The instrument used in the study was the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT).

Chopko et al., (2013) concluded that there was 77.5% reported to be at no risk for alcohol issues. However, 20.4% were determined to be at risk for binge drinking when consuming alcohol (Chopko et al., 2013). The study showed a correlation between increased alcohol use due to trauma and depression among police officer that self-medicate (Chopko et al., 2013). Future studies are need recruiting equal male to female ratio.

Deery et al. (2014) conducted a study that examined if there was a correlation between job demands, presenteeism, and absenteeism. The study determined if mediation effects of presenteeism and the moderating effects of organizational justice had any

association. The study indicated a rise in presenteeism because of the reluctance of employees to take off work (Deery et al., 2014). The study's hypothesis suggested that high job demands in the labor form overload induced presenteeism. Work time off was not favored in the study due to economic uncertainty, downsizing, and staff shortages (Deery et al., 2014).

Deery et al. (2014) provided additional information and clarity regarding absenteeism and presenteeism. The 476 participants were in a 999-emergency call Centre site in the United Kingdom that received 6,000 emergency calls, 24 hours a day. There were 227 participants agreeable to do the study and completed the questionnaire. A Likert scale was measured by the average days absent per episode (Deery et al., 2014). Presenteeism was measured by how many times the employee went to work despite of feeling sick or health issues (Deery et al., 2014). Self-reporting was used to gather data. The results indicated and were consistent with the JD-R model that there was a high job stresses in correlation with presenteeism, projected longer absenteeism (Deery et al., 2014). Meaning, when employees work regardless of health issues, longer time off was necessary to recuperate.

The study provided insight on how absenteeism and presenteeism works. The study also provided addition information in the importance of administrative impartiality as a job resource to better understand why employees respond to work stressors and illnesses. Data showed why police officers take longer comp time after working extended shifts and workweeks (Deery et al., 2014). Presenteeism is thought to increase negative

risk factors for long-term illness due to unresolved minor illnesses (Deery et al., 2014). Limitations of the study suggest that there are few studies on the consequences of presenteeism making it difficult to compare. This could also be considered a weakness in the study. There were also limitations concerning single organizational venue that limited the generalizability of findings. Further research is need that includes other organizational settings including position conflicts, role overload, social support, and job self-sufficiency. There has also been minimal longitude research in this area (Deery et al., 2014).

Fear, Seddon, Jones, Greenberg, and Wessely (2012) provided insight on how mental health issues are unreported due to consequences of stigma. Fear et al. (2012) study on reported mental health issues when comparing anonymous versus identifiable questionnaires. To measure the PTSD domains including: intrusiveness, numbing/avoidance, and hyper-arousal. There were 611 UK military personnel who agreed to the study (Fear et al., 2012). The study revealed that the stigma attached to the reporting of mental health issues resulting from post-traumatic stress symptoms in military soldiers deployed to Iraq (Fear et al., 2012). Many police officers do not report or address health issues due to stigma. Unreported and untreated health issues result in chronic problems for the police officer's future health.

Maintaining confidentiality in the participants is imperatives for trust building. The study provided insight using anonymous and identifiable questionnaires. Fear et al. reported of the 11 social stigma barriers, three stigmatizing beliefs in the identifiable

questionnaire included: “leaders discourage the use of mental health services,” “it would be too embarrassing,” and “I would be seen as weak” were mostly reported. Participants were more likely to select the anonymous over the identifiable questionnaires because of the risk for stigma (Fear et al., 2012). Limitations presented in the study concluded that participants answered the questions honestly. The study concluded that the use of anonymous questionnaires compared to identifiable questionnaire were both relevant in reporting mental health issues in military personnel but not substantial (Fear et al., 2012). More participants were willing to complete the anonymous questionnaires than the identifiable (Fear et al., 2012). The reason was due to stigmatizing beliefs. Military personnel and police officers engage in similar work-related duties. The mental health effects from the critical incidents are similar. Exposure to such incidents can hinder job performances if unreported and or treated due to stigma labeling.

Fletcher, Hooper, Dunican, and Kogi (2015), conducted an in-depth review on the understanding of fatigue, the effects on each individual, management system frameworks, and industry challenges. The study explained how sleep plays a part in the biological, psychological, and social realm differently in each individual. However, insight was provided on how fatigue plays a role in opportunities and potential risks, such as, automation, fatigue-monitoring technologies, staff levels and ethnic differences in the work force. The study explained that fatigue is a natural response to the body (Fletcher et al., 2015). Suggesting that it is not a response that is fixable but managed. The study suggests managing stress by understanding the causes and taking-action to reduce the

effects. However, the research indicated the causes of fatigue were from working conditions that included: excessive work, insufficient breaks, no breaks, inadequate sleep quality, quantity of sleep, low control over work content and pace, and low levels of participation in fatigue management incentives (Fletcher et al., 2015).

The study reviewed previous literature regarding fatigue management and challenges in the industry. Fletcher et al. (2015) found research suggesting that changes be made to the requirements for individual and team activities to reduce peak and sustained physical demands. The study suggested revising a plan of action to reduce fatigue symptoms. Examples suggested to reduce fatigue in the work place were to incorporate more breaks to recover from physical fatigue, working as a team, countermeasures for flexibility to pace the workload, and duration of limiting breaks for the entire shift (Fletcher et al., 2015). Strengths in the research suggested prior studies using a fatigued managed program were effective and are supported by the literature.

The study concluded that implementation of fatigue management programs can benefit how police officers respond to job duties, shift differences, schedules, and performances (Fletcher et al., 2015). This review provided valid literature and evidence to supporting the implantation of stress management intervention and programs in law enforcements.

### **Personal Risk Factors for Work Related Stress**

Backteman-Erlanson, Padyab, and Brulin (2013) conducted a study to determine if there is a correlation between burnout and psychosocial work environment, physical

strain, and stress of conscience in genders. The purpose of the study was to determine if psychosocial work environment and physical demands in police officers increased the risk of burnout and subsequently increasing stress of conscience resulting in occurrence of burnout in gender (Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2013). The study provided an in-depth study on the effects of burnout resulting in physical and psychological problems.

Backteman-Erlanson et al. (2013) study compared both male and female police officers in Sweden. There were 856 male and female officers agree to complete the study. The study was close in equal male versus female ratios. There were 437 females and 419 males in the study. A stratified cross-sectional survey was used. Instruments used in the study included: MBI, the General Nordic Questionnaire for Psychological and Social Factors at Work, Stress Conscience Questionnaire, and Borg's rating of perceived exertion (Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2013). The battery of tests was commonly used and proven to be valid for the study. The questionnaires consisted of questions pertaining to demographics and work characteristics (Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2013). The questions regarding work characteristics asked about the participant's gender, age, marital status, service time, duty type, and employment status (Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2013). The questions regarding lifestyle inquired about exercise, smoking, and drinking behaviors (Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2013). The results of the study concluded that work stress was a contributing factor for emotional exhaustion in both genders. There was also a correlation between burnout and extreme workload, low control, and absence of social support are risk factors supporting the research study in both genders (Backteman-



Erlanson et al., 2013). The design of the study was stratified sample. The stratified sample gave the study nearly equal gender participants. The study's weakness suggested that male dominance in a police setting often result in submissive power that masks gender differences (Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2013). The limitation in the study was the response rate at 56%. However, the large sample size contributed to the strength of the study because the participants included 21 regional law enforcement agencies in Sweden (Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2013).

The study determined that there is a significant high rate for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization among male and female police officers (Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2013). Backteman-Erlanson et al. (2013) provided valid data to prove that there were no substantial differences between male and female views of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization with police officers. This study supports the area of research in the development and implementing of resourceful wellness programs where optimal wellness is the main goal.

Work-related stress affects the mental health in police officers. Karaffa and Koch (2015) conducted a study on the negative effects work related stress has on police officer's mental health. The study recognized organizational stressors intricate in poor work included irregular shifts, extreme paper work, and the lack of administrative support. Police officers are exposed to significant work-related stress, daily (Karaffa & Koch, 2015). The study revealed that police officers are reluctant to seek help due to the stigma, varied unawareness and attitudes regarding their own mental health issues.

The study provided insight on the importance of understanding the stigma and attitudes surrounding police officers experiencing mental health issues. There were 248 participants who agreed to complete a 62-item survey online. Karaffa et al., (2015) administered a survey that included items pertaining to attitudes toward looking for mental health services, mental health stigma motivation to seek services, and view of other officers' motivation to seek help. There was also a demographic questionnaire. Results data showed public stigma and self-stigma were negatively correlated with attitudes toward seeking psychological help (Karaffa & Koch, 2015). Self-stigma fully facilitated the association between public stigma and attitudes regarding pursuing help (Karaffa & Koch, 2015). The study indicated the miss belief that police officers were more likely to believe their colleagues were less likely to seek help for other mental health issues, than what truly occurred (Karaffa & Koch, 2015).

The study established that stigmas in the public eye and among peers exist when seeking help for mental health issues (Karaffa & Koch, 2015). The literature supported that stigma and attitudes are still the leading reasons police officers do not seek mental health support. Limitations in the study were agency reply rate, the use of nonprobability tasting methods, and characteristics of the participants limit the generalizability of the results (Karaffa & Koch, 2015). Strengths of the study were the consistence throughout the data gathering and the tests used were readily were valid (Karaffa & Koch, 2015).

### **Programs**

Hassell, Archbold, and Stichman (2011) conducted a quantitative study on the interrelationships between problems in the work place that included: needed mentoring programs, stress, job satisfaction, and contemplating career changes. The authors looked at gender differences in the workplace, stress, and job satisfaction. Overall, the study indicated that police officers expressing interest in mentoring programs, experienced higher levels of stress than the officers who did not (Hassel et al., 2011). The study showed that female work experiences are comparable to males.

Hassel et al. (2011) piloted a study in a municipal mid-western police department. There were 87 officers, both male and female, who agreed to the study. The results concluded that officers supporting a mentoring program experienced higher levels of work stress. The police officers with reported higher levels of stress and lower job satisfaction (Hassel et al., 2011). However, women police reported their work experiences similar to male officers. A qualitative study was conducted using the Hosmer and Lemeshow parallel lines test and considered to be valid (Hassel et al., 2011). The findings of the tests concluded 54 percent of the police officers believe there is a need for mentoring programs. Previous literature indicates that women experience more issues on the job than men. The literature suggests that women are more prone to social isolation and find it hard to form a relationship with their mentors (Hassel et al., 2011). A weakness of the study suggested the more information could have been obtained in a qualitative study in which to show gender differences supporting the need of more qualitative studies.

The study provided accurate and valid data examining interrelationships between job issues specific to mentoring programs, stress, job contentment, and respect for a career change in law enforcement. The study concluded that future research needs to address the lack of mentoring programs for male and female police officers (Hassel et al., 2011). Qualitative research is needed to gather additional data regarding gender differences in the work force.

### **Assessment**

Arnetz et al. (2013) conducted a study on preventive programs to help improve psychobiological response to stress in law enforcements. Arnetz et al. (2013) study was to provide training to police officers for work-related stressors. The training study was provided for 75 willing participants included: guided imagery and mental practice involving police tactical skills. The scenario based coping strategies and education on stress theories health and performance (Arnetz et al., 2013). The results indicated the intervention group had less negative health symptoms (Arnetz et al., 2013). The control group reported more health issues and complaints. Overall, the intervention group reported has better coping skills with stress than the control group within a two-year period.

The study provided an informative study showing how training protocols can help in decreasing job-related stress in urban law enforcement agencies. The validity of the study was supported through assessing the characteristics of the participants and their ability to handle work-related stressors (Arnetz et al., 2013). Further research can be

useful to show how rural areas may respond to wellness programs. Limitations suggested that loftier assessment regarding the participants is needed to determine how cortisol and DHEA impact the ability to cope with stressful situations in police officer's work duties (Arnetz et al., 2013).

Arnetz et al. (2013) was relevant because it provided supportive evidence implementing preventive health and wellness programs for police officers are effective in maintaining wellness. The study also compared genders concluding there were no substantial differences when measuring physical and psychological health measures for the tests used. This can help future research to show the importance of implementing wellness programs in all law enforcement agencies.

## **Police Officer Wellness Programs**

### **Effects of Stress**

The effects of work-related stress among genders in police officers often result in burnout and health issues (Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2013). Both physical and psychological stressors are accompanied by an increase in health issues causing emotional fatigue, and depersonalization (Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2013). Backteman-Erlanson et al. (2013) revealed in a study the effects of stress in genders. The study examined the effects of stress in male and female police officers. The authors concluded that female police officers reported burnout more than that of male police officers. Backteman-Erlanson et al. (2013) revealed that female police officers reported burnout

was 17 to 23% compared to male reporting from 5 to 12%. The study used a stratified random selection design via questionnaire. Valid instruments were used to obtain the data. Of the 660 participants in the study, 437 were female and 419 were males. Data collected from the participants included questionnaire, demographic and work characteristics (Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2013). The study concluded that females experienced more emotional exhaustion resulting in stress of conscience, high demand, and organizational climate (Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2013). However, male police officers experienced depersonalization resulting in stress of conscience (Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2013).

### **Wellness**

According to Mumford, Taylor, and Kubu (2015), a pilot survey regarding safety and wellness to display achievability, evaluate the need for further research, and lay the foundation for policies and additional support for officer's wellbeing. Wellness programs in police departments need are need. Current policies and procedures need to be revised to reflect gender differences. Policy and procedures in law enforcement agencies need to update regulations incorporating wellness and health programs for police officers (Mumford et al., 2015). There were 184 participants from 11 police agencies in the mid-Atlantic region who agreed to the survey (Mumford et al., 2015). The survey questions included: demographics and employment history, physical activity and diet, job-related

stress, environmental, and critical incident exposures, substance usage, physical and mental health information, and health care usage (Mumford et al., 2015). Results of the study indicated that police officers reported physical health outcomes at rates similar to the general population but screened positive for elevated rates of posttraumatic stress disorder, common mental disorders, and alcohol misuse (Mumford et al., 2015). Future research at regional and national levels is needed to update law enforcement agencies policies and programs. The study backs current studies regarding the need for wellness programs in police departments. Programs should offer resources for gender specific police officers.

### **Intervention and Wellness Programs**

There is a growing need to implement programs that promote wellness in police departments. Programs are needed that aim at decreasing the risk of mental and physical health issues in police officers. Police officers are exposed to critical incidents on the job. Wellness programs are needed to reduce the stress police officers encounter. Research shows that needed programs include wellness incentives, referral, educational programs and coping strategies that supports police culture (Steinkopf et al., 2015). Psychological interventions are needed to ensure the wellbeing of all police officers because psychological assessment and treatment does not mean one size fits all. Suggesting that male and female police officers experience and respond to stress differently.

Steinkopf et al. (2015) examined the method of motivational interviewing. The authors in the study explained the concept of motivational interviewing as expressing

accurate empathy creating a nonjudgmental ambiance; developing discrepancy between individual's here and now state; continuing with conflict and supporting self-efficacy (Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2013). This method of intervention was supported through constructing a strong therapeutic alliance between mental professionals and resistant individuals (Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2013).

Hassell, Archbold, and Stichman (2011) examined workplace experiences in police officer genders. Further studies are need in work place experiences with gender in police officers suggested intervention efforts to implement better interrelationships in mentoring programs, stress, job contentment and or career modification. Backteman-Erlanson et al. (2013) concluded in a study that there was a need for mentoring programs in departments with high levels of work stress in both genders (Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2013).

### **Summary**

Police officers are exposed to high levels of stress as part of their daily jobs regardless of gender. However, male and female police officers experience and cope with the ill effects differently. As a result of a high-risk job, the toll impacts police officers both physically and psychologically. Police department from small town to metropolitan areas are at risk (Hakan Can & Hendy, 2014). Exposure to stressful situations often results in burnout, mental and physical health issues, and absenteeism.

Police officers experiencing stress related issues often report sleep disruptions. Police officers reported sleep disruptions that included: not enough sleep, too much sleep,



sleep apnea, and snoring (McCanlies et al., 2012). Poor sleep results in the officer's inability to focus, hinders cognition, decision making, health, and family life (Bell et al., 2015). Poor sleep also can lead to metabolic irregularities, such as, cardiovascular disease (McCanlies et al., 2012). Other contributing factors of poor sleep in police officers were overtime and different shifts (Wolkow et al., 2015).

Wellness programs are important in the wellbeing of police officers. Male and female are not the same implying that interventions and treatment need to be specific. There are many different types of intervention methods that can be utilized in decreasing work-related stress among genders in police officers. However, when treating police officers, family should also be considered. Education in understanding stress and how to decrease stress can be a police officer's best tool in the prevention of burnout, health issues, sleep disturbances, and family issues.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

According to Gachter et al. (2011), men and women in law enforcement experience work stress differently depending on the stressors and the reactions to the event. Maran et al. (2015) conducted a quantitative study on work stress, anxiety, and coping strategies in police officers. The results concluded that female police officers are often exposed to more stress due to their quest to be accepted (Gachter et al., 2011). There is the lack of qualitative research examining stress in gender and work performance, affecting sleep and work-family relationships. A gap suggests a need for future examination in qualitative studies in gender and its relationship to stress in job performances, sleep experiences, and family life (Hassell et al., 2011). There is a need for this study because it could help create awareness of the negative effects job-related stress has on police officers when ignored. It might also provide resources and education that encourage police officers to seek professional help for overall mental and physical wellbeing. It can also offer a better understanding of the consequences of stress in police officers and propose methods for creating a positive outlook concerning health, better sleeping habits, and happier families.

In this chapter, I examine work-related stress in genders affecting job performance, sleep, and personal family life. I also examined the psychological and physiological effects stress has on each gender, discuss the research methodology, and

the importance for using qualitative research. Lastly, I discuss the ethical sensitivities and strategies to implement wellness programs in all law enforcement agencies.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The research question provided guidance in the conceptual framework, suggesting that there is very little qualitative research on gender in police officers' work-related stressors affecting sleep and family life. To address gender differences in work stress, the following research question guided this qualitative study: "What are the lived experiences of how work stress affects performance, sleep, and family life in male and female police officers?"

### **Definition of Central Concepts**

Qualitative research looks at the participants' personal experiences, perceptions, and incentives in efforts to have a better understanding of the experience. This indicates that the researchers ask the questions of why and how the participants experiences affected them and the lessons learned from the experiences (see Creswell, 2013). Theory denotes a specific type of explanation of a phenomenon experienced through guided concepts and principles (Creswell, 2013). However, the type of study conducted typically determines the role of theory in regards to the methodology or theoretical perspective (Creswell, 2013). The theoretical concept suggests that there are already significant amounts of information in existence in which to continue building upon. Past research was conducted in the areas of mental health, shift duties, and sleep disturbances in emergency personnel (Vargas de Barros et al., 2012). Further qualitative research is need

in police officers' gender has on shift work, health, and family life. Creswell (2013) suggested that in the theoretical framework, the researcher devises a theory in which the phenomenon is supported, predicted, and understood. The idea is to link the researcher with current knowledge that is guided by theory. The theory for this particular study suggests the ability for a person to adjust to stressors and challenges (De Terte & Stephens, 2014). Yet, some police offices still do not report concerns due to stereotyping, loss of career, and/or negative feedback from peers. Maran et al. (2015) conducted a quantitative study on the effects of stress exposure. The study concluded that women police officers handle more stress to achieve acceptance and esteem. A conceptual framework suggests that there is very little information about the study indicating more research is need in this area (Creswell, 2013). The framework should be used to plan the course of action for the research regarding an idea or an assumption and suggests that the research knows the objective (Creswell, 2013).

The research study might impact social change by actively promoting education on how stress affects the work performance of male and female police officers, as well as effects on health and family. The study could create awareness and education in identifying work-related stress, the importance of early intervention, and develop resources for male and female police officers for optimal health and wellness.

Police officers' reports stress and sleep disturbances indicate the need for the implementation of programs that help decrease job related stressors. There are gaps with the quality of care received and with the care system itself (Maran et al., 2015).

Incentives could be provided to promote and support wellness programs in police departments (Maran et al., 2015). The study concluded that positive adjustments to a traumatic incident suggested identifying the mechanisms that predispose police officers through training and education, resulting in less vulnerability when exposed to significant stress. There is a negative stereotype for reporting work related stress. Furthermore, there are limited qualitative studies examining whether or not there are differences in gender related to these issues.

### **Roles of the Researcher**

Research defines the success or failure of change in any process. The success of any research suggests accurate information and findings. Researchers can separate valid information from non-valid research by using their skills and knowledge (Creswell, 2009). Researchers must be mindful and respect different values, attitudes and behaviors when conducting their studies. The attitude of the researcher reflects and results in the success or failure of change in the process. The success of research suggests accurate information and findings (Creswell, 2009). A researcher can separate valid information from non-valid research by using his or her skills and knowledge (Creswell, 2009). Obtaining data requires asking questions, by addressing why it is important, what one hopes to accomplish, and what the problem is under investigation (Creswell, 2009).

Research is merely a continuation of another researchers' work (Creswell, 2009). It can be any form of systematic and arranged investigation to organize facts or gather data, and is often related to a problem to be solved (Creswell, 2009). Any research is at

the center of the process of learning about the world (Creswell, 2009). People depend on the accumulated knowledge and experience of society (Creswell, 2009). Research is the process that society uses to build further on the collection of information (Creswell, 2009). It is a process of finding out new data based on facts gathered in ways that lessens biased opinions (Creswell, 2009).

Qualitative data can be gathered from information in a nonnumeric form (Creswell, 2009). Nonnumeric forms of information may include ethnography, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenological research, and narrative research to help create an agenda for change or reform (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative data analysis is the range of process and procedures in which the researcher moves from qualitative data collected, into some form of explanation, understanding, or interpretation of the people and situations that are being researched (Creswell, 2009).

Research is a life skill because that allows one to learn how the world is and document his/her findings. Being an effective researcher suggests seeing life as it could and should be by using knowledge to make a difference in the world. This can be accomplished by engaging in the identifying of problems, seeking and implementing practical solutions, and systematically monitoring and reflecting on the process and outcomes of change to improve upon society's quality of life (Creswell, 2009). Research is a lifelong process that allows the researcher to be involved and be part of the world for a richer vision. As data is collected, theory develops in which components are connected from the study.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

I conducted a qualitative study. Using a narrative approach, the participants shared their own stories about shift work experiences, and how it impacted sleep and family life. The participants included six males and four females who agreed to partake in the study. Interviews were conducted as part of the data collection and analysis. The analysis was constructed in a chronological order of stories and developed themes through which to use the technique of restoring for the narrative report (Creswell, 2013).

The population selection for the study was police officers who agreed to participate in the study. I interviewed both males and females ranging in age. The facility in which I conducted the interviews was at the local police department. The goal was to learn about the police officers' lived experiences and how stress affected their work performances and family lives.

There are three characteristics in a narrative interviewing approach. They include (a) detailed texture, (b) relevance fixation, and (c) closing of the gestalt (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). Detailed texture suggests descriptive information is provided in regards to the conversational flow of one event to next. Relevance fixation refers to specifics of the event that are important to the participant telling the story. Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) explained that closing the gestalt suggests reporting or documenting the interview entirely to include the beginning, middle and end.

The techniques used for this narrative approach suggest self-generating schema. Self-generating schema begins with “once upon a time” with respect to the police officers telling their story (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). A schema method is a semi-autonomous process that is stimulated by pre-existing conditions that stimulate the beginning of their story, told by the participant, as it unfolds.

When conducting an interview, the first step is to establish a good rapport with the interviewee by smiling and greeting and thanking, acknowledging their name, introducing myself, and inviting him/her to sit down. The purpose was explained by asking if they were okay with answering the questions (Janesick, 2011). An explanation of how long the interview and the questions asked were provided for the participants. An informed consent was explained and agreed upon by the interviewees. The open-ended questions needed to be clear, useful information pertaining to the study. Providing a time allows the interviewee a time frame of how long the interview may last (Janesick, 2011). Modeling is important because it allows both the interviewer and interviewee to adjust to one another. It is presented through body language. Proper body language is indicated through actions, such as preparedness, confidence, voice tone, active listening, responsive to questions, eye contact, professionalism, and reflecting (Janesick, 2011). Information obtained was respected and protected. Respecting time is important. Near the end of the session, the interviewer asked if there were anything he or she would like to add. At the end of the session, I thanked the interviewee and re-stated that the interviewee would be provided with transcripts of the interview (Janesick, 2011).



### **Instrumentation**

When deciding an appropriate sample size in a qualitative research study, it is important to take into consideration perceptiveness and understanding of the information being collected. Consideration of the research should include the reasons for conducting the study, research method, intent of research, and strategies in which to develop a purposeful sample.

Sample size in qualitative research can prove to be most important. A small sample size may not support the reason for the study. A sample size that is too large may prove to be too large for the analysis and costly (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative sampling size is determined by the researcher's judgment and experience with data collection regarding the research study's purpose, the number of interviews, data intent, and method to collect the data (Creswell, 2013).

Other factors that contribute to sampling size are the dimensions, such as breadth versus depth. The phenomenological study would suggest a narrative approach with the participants, which may require less of a sample size (Creswell, 2013). Another factor suggests the logics of the study, such as, presume size, finances or sponsored multiple sites, sources of data, method used to conduct the study, time frame, and appropriate response to research questions to be asked (Creswell, 2013). When determining the number of participants, the researcher should consult an experienced qualitative researcher to gain knowledge, understanding, and to ask questions regarding the qualitative study (Creswell, 2013).

Managing data is also an important consideration in data collection. Field notes, audio, and video are good ways to keep track of interviews and observations (Creswell, 2013). Maintaining the data suggests appropriate software that can store, sort, and create a memo to be used during the analysis of all the data. For the qualitative study, I used the NVivo software to manage my data. NVivo can assist in the organization and analysis of the data (NVivo10). The data collected was a non-numeric and unstructured. NVivo can help manage bibliographical data from the participants (NVivo10). NVivo's design is developed to classify, sort, and arrange information, the correlation of the data, and organize all the data in reference to audio, video, field notes, and other documents that were customized by me (NVivo10).

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

When collecting data in a qualitative research study, it is important to select the valid, appropriate, and relevant data for the actual study. The topic area for my study was with male and female police officers work related stressors. For this study, a narrative approach would be appropriated. I wanted to know and understand the police officer's thoughts, feelings, and how he or she coped with their emotions when faced with work related stressors. I wanted to know how work-related stress impacted the police officer's job performance, sleep and family life. Interviewing, personal testimonies, and observation are three methods of data collection to be used in the study (Creswell, 2013). A narrative approach allowed the police officers to tell their stories of how they coped with their stressors (Creswell, 2013).

### **Data Analysis Plan**

To collect the data in the study, I interviewed the participants. Creswell (2013) states that it lets the interviewee tell his or her story as it unfolds, personal meaning, and the lessons learned from the experience. I wanted to understand their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors regarding their job stressors. Through interviews, I allowed the interviewee to tell his or her story as it unfolds in time (Creswell, 2013). Field notes will be the method used during the interviews and audio taping if permitted. The participants told their personal experiences of how stressors impact their job duties, sleep, and family life. During the interviewing process, I have to also be observant of the participant. When observing, I looked at their environment and behaviors. When asking the questions, I will be looking at body language, listening to any changes in their voice, eye contact, and gesturing in which to document reactions to the questions. Patton (2002) suggests the importance of knowing an understanding what to observe regarding the site and environment. I also observed how the participants react to their interview environment. The environment can play an important role as to the reaction and comfort of the participant. An example suggests that if the participant had a negative experience in a similar building or environment, then it could cause undue stress and anxiety to the participant. The environment needs to be a neutral environment. For this study, the interviews were conducted at the local library conference room. The conference room is private and will be reserved for the interviews.

This study used a narrative methodology to understand the individual's phenomena and personal experiences. It will also help to further the quality improvement of the research by allowing the audience to hear their experiences. Other approaches not used for the study were naturalistic story gathering, organizational case study and collective sense making. Naturalistic story gathering will not be used because I am not a field worker gathering data. Organizational case study will not be used because I will not be presenting improvement in the form of a detailed story. Collective sense making will not be used because I am not part of a quality improvement team for the law enforcement agencies. However, I conducted the study, gathering information and interpreting the data independently. Therefore, the other approaches would not be indicated in this study.

The focus of the research was to look at the police officer's stressors in regards to job duties, sleep disruptions, family life, and availability of resources. I explored the police officers work experience to understand how stress affects genders. I want to determine if stress is handled the same or differently in gender and in the police department. The police officers were able to tell their personal experiences with work-related stress. Patton (2002) describes this as honoring their personal experiences. It is respectful to be mindful that police officers place their lives on the line in daily.

Qualitative characteristics look at how police officers are affected in job performance and family life situations. The researchers want to understand if and how gender is attributed to different stressors. The process of data collection provides the research team with explanations, understanding, or interpretation of personal experiences

of the study participants (Creswell, 2013). The research will explore the participant's personal feelings through a narrative description of their law enforcement careers. Data is obtained through observation, interviews, and field notes. Journals can also be used for documenting purposes in the data collection. The researcher conducted interviews with the participants. There was a total of 10 participants, six males and four females, agreeable to participate in the study. Once data is collected, the trained researcher, compiles, interprets, organizes, and prepares the data to for analysis (Creswell, 2013). The duration of the data collection was two weeks. The focus is to provide feedback on the participant's job stressors and how it impacts genders. Strengths of a qualitative method suggest descriptive references to behavior, emotions, and personality characteristics as it relates to work-related stressors. Qualitative research does not require a large number of participants. Weakness in this study may indicate that the reliability of the results. The participants would need to answer the questions honestly. If questions are not answered honestly, then the results of the study will be skewed. The interpreter has to be trained when interpreting the results. Different interpretations can also cause results to be different and inaccurate. For this study, I conducted the interviews, entering the data in NVivo, and interpreting the results.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

Qualitative research looks at the individual's or participant's personal experience, perception, and incentives in efforts to have a better understanding of the experience.

This would indicate that the researchers ask the questions of why and how the participants' experience affected them, and the lesson learned from the experience (Creswell, 2013). Theory denotes a specific type of explanation of a phenomenon experience through guided concepts and principles (Creswell, 2013). However, the type of study conducted typically determines the role of theory in regards to the methodology or theoretical perspective (Creswell, 2013). The theoretical concept suggests that there is already a significant amount of information in existence in which to continue building on. Past research has been done on the causes' generating stress symptoms and treatment, such as cognitive behavior therapy (Maran et al., 2015). Creswell (2013) suggests that in the theoretical framework, the researcher devises a theory in which phenomenon is supported, predicted, and understood. The idea is to link the researcher with current knowledge that is guided by theory. The theory for this particular study suggests the police officers that do not receive continued mental health treatment due to lack of reporting symptoms or the lack of following through with further assessment of stress symptoms and sleep disruptions. A conceptual framework suggests that there is very little information regarding qualitative studies and indicates more research is needed in this area. The method used to plan the course of action for the research or to represent a course of action regarding an idea or an assumption, suggesting that the research knows the objective (Creswell, 2013). For this study, the police officers would be able to tell their stories and find alternative solutions to decrease work related stress.

### **Dependability**

Qualitative research raises the question dependability. When research is repeated in the same manner in which it was previously conducted; the outcome should mirror the same. To ensure dependability of the study, the methodology and participants are to be used exactly as followed in the study. It is the same as following a recipe. The recipe or study has to be followed accurately to replicate the results. To accomplish this task, the researcher must compare and cross check the data in the methodology of the qualitative study. This is known as triangulation of qualitative data sources (Patton, 2002). Once the data is collected and concluded with exactness; the interviewee reviews it. This process allows for better accuracy without bias from the researcher.

### **Conformability**

Conformability is used to ensure personal prejudices are not interjected within the study. Patton (2002) suggests a strong process engages applicable questions, analysis, evidence, analysis documentation, and excludes any opposing evidence. The approach allows the researcher to uncover and address any biases that may influence the collected data resulting in skewed results. For this study, I did not have any ties with the local law enforcement department. The conformability approach reduced the possibility for researcher bias.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Ethical considerations need to be addressed before, during, and after the study. It is important to ensure that the participant's privacy is protected because personal

information disclosed will be entrusted into my care. Informed consent needs to be explained prior to the interviews (Patton, 2002). Proper legal consents and documentation have to be explained with understanding and completed prior to the study. I also have to be mindful of personal biases (Patton, 2002). These participants provided me with personal testimonies of their work-related experiences. I have to maintain an open mind and stay focused on the goals of my research.

Awareness and education are important in early discovery work-related stress in genders. Early discovery can mean early interventions to help decrease and or alleviate stress. Research is significant in police genders because it supports positive social change aimed at broadening the understanding of work stressors that positively influences health through the understanding of the risk factors and determines who may be more at risk. This ultimately can affect social change by helping to create awareness in the all law enforcement agencies and society. It can also help other police officers and families who feel they are alone, seek help by providing resources.

With any research, there are always minimal risks. Minimal means taking into considerations the potential and degree of harm (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 2008). When conducting research, ethical considerations need to be addressed before, during, and after the study. It is important to ensure all participants' privacy is protected. Personal information disclosed will be entrusted into my care. Informed consent will have to be explained prior to the survey. Proper legal consents and documentation must



be explained with understanding and completed prior to the study. I have to maintain an open mind and stay focused on the goals of my research and minimize any biases.

The American Psychological Association (2010) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct mandate the practice of foster accuracy, honesty, and dependability to participants. All Information and data must be protected throughout the entire study. Prior to obtaining information and data from the participants, informed consent must be explained with full understanding. The Specialty Guidelines for Forensic Psychologist (2011), guideline 6 states that the services rendered by the psychologist must be explained, which includes rights, authorizations, and properties. This guideline can be violated in a research setting if proper safeguards are not followed under the guidelines. The participants must be made aware of information obtained can be used in further research, teaching purposes, and training (APA, 2010). The misuse of data or representation of the researcher can be damaging on a professional level and for future research.

Ethical issues to consider with work-related stressors in genders are informed consent and ensuring the participants are agreeable to participate in the study. The American Counseling Association, or ACA (2005), states all clients are provided with an understanding of their rights, in which confidentiality is maintained at all times. As a researcher, I would ensure that assigning a number or aliases for identification purposes identifies each individual. It would be my obligation to ensure each participant fully understands the informed consent. It is essential to be mindful of all data obtained; the

importance of the research; and how it will improve upon strategies to reduce work-related stress in the genders.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

In conclusion, the goal of the study was to investigate stress in police officer's and how it affects job duties, sleep, and families in the different genders. Previous studies conducted were of a qualitative method. For this study, a qualitative study was chosen in efforts to understand how male and female police officers respond to work stress by telling their stories. The methodological chosen was a narrative approach. A narrative approach allows male and female police officers to tell their stories. The study examined stress in police officer's experiences in work performances and gender. The questions would be answered if there was a difference in how each gender experiencing stress and work performances. Current programs need to be revised to incorporate gender differences. Programs are need in police departments to help identify high-risk police officers and manage job-related stresses.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the participants' personal experiences, perceptions, and means of motivation to have a better understanding of how work-related stress affects well-being. I also wanted to examine whether or not there were differences in gender-related stressors affecting work performance. To gain this knowledge and understanding, I obtained permission to interview police officers from a local police department in the Midwest. Because of the limited qualitative research in this area, I wanted to allow the police officers to tell their own stories to examine the participants' personal experiences, perceptions, and motivation in terms of having a better understanding of whether or not there were differences in gender-related stressors affecting police work performance. Qualitative literature examining gender and work-related stress associated with police work is limited. For this study, I asked the questions of why and how the participants' experiences as patrol officers affected their personal and social lives. I also examined the lesson learned from the experiences (see Creswell, 2013).

The research questions in the study were addressed using a qualitative approach. I used a narrative methodology to understand the police officers' phenomena and personal experiences. The basis for the interview questions allowed the police officers to tell their experiences with job stress and created a foundation for further research in stress management programs in police departments. In Chapter 4, I discuss the setting,

demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and the results of the interviews. I also provide the themes and responses from the police officers regarding the interview questions.

### **Setting**

A qualitative research design was used for the study. A narrative approach was used to allow the participants to tell their own experiences with work, and how stress affected sleep and family life. The research question was, “What are the lived experiences of how work stress affects performance, sleep, and family life in male and female police officers?” Data were collected at different sites, including the local police department and the public library. A private conference room was reserved at both facilities. The participants selected their choice for the interview location.

### **Demographics**

Once Walden University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study, recruitment for participants was completed. My IRB approval code was #10-05-18-0168875. The study took additional time because a change regarding a point of contact was submitted to IRB and approved. My original contact person was off for medical leave and was not available to finish the study. After gaining IRB approval, I contacted the chief of the police to set up a face-to-face meeting to further discuss the study and participant recruitment. I then printed copies of all the documents that were provided to the chief. After the meeting, an e-mail was sent to the chief with a letter containing my contact information to the potential subjects inviting them to participate in my study. The

participants contacted the chief or me via e-mail and stated they would like to voluntarily partake in the study. Participants who wanted to remain anonymous e-mailed or contacted me personally. The police department was small to mid-size, located in the Midwest with about 60 police officers.

To obtain permission for the data collection, I placed flyers at the police station to recruit six male and six female police officers. The chief sent e-mails to participants again to further encourage participants. I also attended chief's meeting and provided additional information on the study.

Although I wanted to recruit six females and six males, I obtained only four females and six males for participation. Participants included police officers, six males, and four females from a mid-sized, Midwest police department. All were of various ages, race, ethnicity, and stages in their careers as police officers. The 10 participants volunteered to be interviewed for the study. All participants met criteria including experience as a patrol officer in law enforcement during their careers. The police officers were at different stages in their careers ranging from five to thirty years on the force. The age ranges were from the mid-20s to the early 60s.

### **Data Collection**

Participants were contacted via phone. Interviews were scheduled for each participant at their location choice. Interviews were conducted with each participant at either the police department or at the local library. Participants reviewed and signed consent forms. The participants were also advised that the interviews would be recorded

for the sole purpose of transcribing the data. They were also informed that all interviews were confidential and that I would interpret the data. I addressed any concerns or questions at this time. Each participant agreed to the terms and signed the consent form during his or her scheduled interview.

Each participant was provided the questions to be asked during the interview. The questions were the same for each participant. Each participant was instructed that he or she could talk much as needed and could stop the interview at any time. They were also informed again that the interview would be recorded solely for transcription and data analysis. The length of interviews ranged from between 6:08 to 43:18 minutes/seconds.

All interviews were transcribed for quality assurance and member checking. All recorded audio was kept in a locked safe in my home office. I am the only person who can unlock the safe. The transcripts were sent to each participant to review for accuracy. Each participant was instructed to review their transcript and make any changes before approval. When the transcriptions were approved, data analysis was utilized.

### **Data Analysis**

For each question asked, the participants were allowed to tell their personal stories. There were four categories of the interview questions regarding their lived experiences of work-stress, including (a) experiences regarding stress, (b) signs and symptoms of stress, (c) how gender affects stress, and (d) coping mechanisms. Each participant was asked the same questions during the interview to identify themes from

their statements. The themes and statements were then used to identify descriptions of the participants' personal experiences and the phenomenon.

These themes and statements were then used to write a description of the participants' experiences, the context of their experiences, and situations of the phenomenon. The experiences and themes described the overall common experiences and were analyzed and reported.

The interview transcripts were read in their totality to understand each of the participant's experiences. Each of the interviews were analyzed by highlighting the significant statements that pertained to their experiences with the police officers' performances, referred to as horizontalization. Horizontalization of the significant statements was then placed into a cluster to develop themes from the collected data (see Creswell, 2013). A cluster of meaning and significant statements was coded resulting in a description of the participants' experiences and presented in the research findings. The conclusion of the study results allowed the reader to understand what the participants' experiences were during their work shifts.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

The participants told their stories and identified alternative solutions to decrease work-related stress. I asked the questions of why and how the participants' experiences affected them, and the lessons learned from the experiences (see Creswell, 2013). Data collected was member checked by me to assure accuracy. Once data was transcribed, a

copy was sent to each of the participants via e-mail or in-person for verification of accuracy and credibility. The participants were asked to review their transcript to ensure the information was accurate, and to add to, or change information that may have been interpreted differently.

### **Dependability**

To ensure dependability, I confirmed that the qualitative study could be repeated by another interviewer by asking the participants the same questions. The transcripts were read many times to identify themes, nodes, and cases. Developing patterns and were gathered then organized into concepts, ideas, and experiences. The study has to be followed accurately to replicate the results. To accomplish this task, I compared and cross-checked the data in the methodology of the study. This is known as the triangulation of qualitative data sources (Patton, 2002). Once the data was collected and accuracy was verified the interviewee reviewed it.

### **Conformability**

Conformability is used to ensure personal prejudices are not interjected within the study. Patton (2002) suggested a strong process engages applicable questions, analysis, evidence, analysis documentation, and excludes any opposing evidence. The approach allows the researcher to uncover and address any biases that may influence the collected data resulting in skewed results. The study did not have any ties with the local law enforcement department. The conformability approach reduced the possibility of



researcher bias. Also, member checking reduces researcher bias as subjects ensure that data gathered is reflective of the information they shared with the researcher.

Ethical considerations were respected and followed throughout the study. Participants' information will remain confidential and private. Informed consent, legal consents, and documentation forms were read and explained before the start of the interviews for each participant. All participants' privacy was protected throughout the process. A letter with a number code was assigned for each participant's interview to protect the identities of the participants. All information and data collection have been placed in a locked, secured file cabinet.

### **Results**

The research question was: "What are the lived experiences of how work stress affects performance, sleep, and family life in male and female police officers?" A narrative methodology was used to understand the individual's phenomena and personal experiences. The data was collected through interviews with the participants. The participants were asked questions addressing their lived experiences with work-related stress for police officers. To gain insight into how the participants' personal experiences affected them and answer the research questions, the interviewee was asked to tell their own story as police officers. Field notes and audio taping were used to collect the data. The participants addressed issues regarding work-related stress that affected their performance, sleep, family, and social life. I also observed each of the participants during the interview process for any behavior or environmental changes, such as, body language,

listening to any changes in their voice, eye contact, and gesturing to document reactions to the questions. Environmental and site factors can influence the participants in an interview, such as temperature, lighting, and size of the room (Patton, 2002). For the environmental considerations, two sites offered in which to conduct the interviews. Each participant chose the site, the police station, and the public library. It provided the participant with an optional site, as well as, participating anonymously. Before beginning the interviews, each participant was asked if he or she was comfortable in the environmental setting. All participants stated they were comfortable with the site they chose. The four categories of the interview regarding the police officers' lived experiences of work-related stress included (a) experiences regarding stress, (b) signs and symptoms of mental and physical health problems, (c) how gender affects stress, and (d) coping mechanisms. There were no variations or unusual circumstances encountered in data collection as described in Chapter 3 of the study.

### **Lived Experiences from Work-Related Stresses**

All 10 of the participants provided a detailed description of their lived experience of work-related stress from a police officer's view. Each participant was in a different area of law enforcement; however, all had experienced during their careers as patrol officers, detective, truancy officers, reserves, and ranking officers. The themes derived from the four questions were related to family and social interaction, health, and work performance.

The themes that emerged from the data collected were coded: work-related stress, health, and performance. The nodes identified for work-related stress were family or social. Health nodes were coping mechanisms, effects, sleep, and performance to included positive and negative effects.

### **Experiences Regarding Stress**

Each of the participants provided a detailed narrative of how stress effects their daily jobs, family and social lives. The descriptions from the participants provided the foundation for the study. All participants had experiences as a patrol officer during their career as a police officer. The female officers identified experiences with stress as others not pulling their weight, not taking calls, disrespect, and wellness program to include more options for maximum health, for example, health incentives for weight loss, stop smoking, and exercising. The males reported: gun belt and vest; the unknown; serious injury; a shooter; suspect loose; felony in progress; accidents; police officer down; intoxicated people, and dispatch's response when giving outcall.

Table 1

#### *Identified Stressors for Female Police Officers*

Stressor	F1	F2	F3	F4
Others not pulling weight	X	X	X	
Not taking calls		X	X	
Disrespect			X	
Better wellness program	X	X	X	X

Table 2  
*Identified Stressors for Male Police Officer*

Stressor	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
Gun belt and vest issues					X	X
Responding to an unknown call	X	X	X			
Serious injury or death	X			X		
A shooter	X	X				
Suspect loose	X					
Felony in progress		X				
Accidents		X				
Police officer down		X				
Intoxicated people						X
Response of dispatch			X			

### **Participant #F1**

“Other people don't carry their load. That was a huge stressor for me. They were just lazy and lazy people tend to piss me off. I shouldn't carry you on my back because you're taking too much time to do simple things and just being lazy. Now I had my lazy days just like everybody else and I had a lot more in the past years. But people that wouldn't carry their workload. That was a big stressor for me. It always infuriated me when I'm constantly taking care of things.”

**Participant #F2**

“People not pulling her weight. Yeah. Because a lot of people will milk their calls and stay tied up so they don't have to take other calls. And then we have to cover their area and take the majority of them.”

**Participant #F3**

“Well there's a lot of things but I'm able to control. As far as you know trying to communicate. But when they continue then you start to get a little elevated because you got to make sure that you're keeping in control of the situation. You know and then people a lot of times you know like I said I found that communicating you know on their level depending on what areas in the city that you're in sometimes, you have to talk like them to get them to talk and relate to you. As far as pushing buttons I mean just the disrespect. You know if you're a cop. Law enforcement. What are you going to do type attitude, so I am here to help you? I choose not to deal with jerks either other than my work-related stuff.”

**Participant #F4**

“So, our wellness they want to portray that we're part of everything the city does. Until you know we need something or. I think if we had something internally were with other officers or other people that know what some of the officers go through at home from dealing with things on the job instead of OK if you have the Nerve to even ask for help. You got to go through all this stuff to get a hold of somebody through EAP which I've done. OK. So, we're obviously... Your man

and your women are geared differently. The stressors of the job are the same. But women tend to hang on to shit. Males can let go a little bit faster than we can. So, you can analyze everything. I thought that I didn't do right on this last call or. And they come like Oh hey what's for supper. Well, we're eating and I'm still thinking about the call. So I think a lot of just the stressors, in general, they can let go easier than women can. And then all at the same time, we're trying to prove that we can let go to and not hold on to it. You know I mean so. You're trying your darndest to pretend that you're just like them too that can just let it go or whatever.”

**Participant #M1**

“The unknown where there's a good possibility of violence. Or if someone has been seriously hurt like a shot and the shooter could still be there or the suspect could still be there. That does. Or like walking into someplace where. Good possibility that the suspect is still there but like hiding and you don't know where they are. That does it also.”

**Participant #M2**

“Accidents serious injury accidents. That was stressful. Officers in dangerous circumstances whether it be shooting or knife situations where the unknown was there. While I was a police officer I was Shot at, Run over by a Grits bus. Not everybody went through the same things. So, I mean basically you. Just, you know a felony in progress.”

**Participant #M3**

“It's really anything. I mean it's anytime that their call comes over the radio it's any self-initiated activity that you do because it's the unknown. You'd never know what's going to happen. You know from traffic stops you know traffic stops and daytime are completely different from traffic stops at night. You know that you know approaching somebody in the daytime is completely different than approaching somebody by flashlight. You know and as simple as responding to a call responding to a call in the daytime is completely different from responding to a call at nighttime because you have that cover of darkness and that just presents some stress in and of itself. You know I think that you know the information that isn't given by a dispatcher over the radio can elevate your stress because; You're listening to what is being said and that causes you to try to start to visualize where you're going.”

**Participant #M4**

“My wife is the big pushing factor in that cause. It uh. It affected her. Me just bottling everything up. I'd come home just sit on the couch not really say anything or really want to do anything. I just wanted to be at home. And it was about the time that we had our little boy. So, she was balancing him, plus school and work and then also house stuff while I'm just kind of you know a slug on the couch really because I just didn't feel like doing anything. But. I mean the big factor at home was, I knew that it was affecting her. Then I would come to work and I

would try and shut everything out from that but in the back of my mind you know I could be home I could be doing this. I could be doing that.”

**Participant #M5**

“Well, first of all, there wasn't a whole lot of females in law enforcement. And You know the family was one area and law enforcement were the other and the two never really interacted that much. So, I mean for me sometimes your account with that was a good thing or a bad thing. I don't know. But with the females, I remember is that you know, the big thing was the way we dealt with stress we just joking around.”

**Participant #M6**

“Drunk people. I just don't. I don't drink. Just drunk people. I don't know.... some are funny and nice. Well yes, I know some are funny, well yeah, I guess for me, everybody's got their triggers. They call it you know and then somebody's yelling at me. I don't mind getting insulted you know. Just talk bad about me, that's fine. When I start yelling noise just hurts me, it just gets on my nerves. I don't know why but it does so that increases my stress.

So, it was a big brawl. And one of my other guys. He was an older guy. of course, I say you're older I'm 51. I guess he's probably 45 at the time. He was big and so he just falls out and I thought I know he's had a heart attack or what everyone else was fight everywhere then, so he falls out ambulance won't come because it's in the middle of a fight so I thought man, I'm stressed now you know because he's



down everybody else is fighting these people and there are only four of us and there's a whole bunch of slew of them.

I don't know you know sitting on your gun belt. Oh yeah. yeah, that's a bad thing there. Yeah. And that vest, of course, I was a detective and stuff for the last 10 years. So, I didn't use the vest or anything but. But early on you know that vest. was awful.”

### **Signs and Symptoms**

To have a better understanding of how work stress impacts the police officers, each participant was asked what signs and symptoms of stress occurred from their experiences. The question supports the need to familiarize the mental and physical health issues correlated with work stress in the police department. Sleep difficulties were identified in the study as a problem for both male and female participants. The emerging theme for the Signs and Symptoms was identified under the work stress node were Health and Effects. The key like words that emerged for females were: sleep problems, shakiness, heart racing, backaches, neck aches, headaches, and weight gain. Emerging key like words or themes for males were: tension, flushed, tunnel vision, adrenaline rush, headaches, fatigue sleep, aggravated, mental and physical drain, racing thoughts, and fatigue.

Table 3

*Signs and Symptoms of stress for Female Police Officers*

Signs and symptoms	F1	F2	F3	F4
Sleep problems	X			
Shakiness		X		
Backaches		X		
Neck aches		X		X
Headaches			X	X
Weight gain	X			
Health issues	X	X		X

Table 4

*Signs and Symptoms of stress for Male Police Officers*

Signs and symptoms	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
Tension	X	X	X			
Flushed		X				
Tunnel vision		X				
Adrenalin rush		X	X			
Headache	X	X	X		X	
Fatigue sleep		X		X	X	X
Aggravated		X				
Mental and physical drain				X		
Racing thoughts				X		
Fatigue			X	X	X	
Health issues			X		X	X

**Participant #F1**

“I’ve always had problems with sleep. I’ve been on blood pressure medication since I was 28. Yeah. I have. Hashimoto's Disease that's different but it's harder to control when you're under stress. I retain weight when I'm stressed. My eating habits change when I'm stressed because I'm a nervous eater.”

**Participant #F2**

“I get the shakes and my heart races if I get stressed. I get a lot of backaches. Yeah. Neck and back. I have arthritis in my back.”

**Participant #F3**

“I do get occasional headaches. And it's usually when I'm dealing with something extremely stressful. You know normally I can tell the difference you know because like I'll start right in my temples here and right here is normally where I'll get that and I'm like I've got a stress headache now I'll just like some Ibuprofen.”

**Participant #F4**

“Yeah. Well to increase stress. Right now, it would be whenever we're shorthanded. You don't really get breaks for them because you're not really. you know our schedule and set up for a break. I think that causes more stress because you can't really rebound. Well, I don't know what the word would be. If you're writing a bunch of reports and then you're trying to keep track of this report and then you're like shit here's another report. You're going to be stressed and already not going to be able to give you a hundred percent or maybe you know you think

later after you do the call you think well heck, I didn't even ask them this. you know because you're so worked up and need to use the bathroom. I can't go you know the guys can go, I got to take all my gear off each time and it's like a pain you know because you can't be quick about it and then you may have one guy that's not doing a darn thing and you know.

I mean I like it now but it was very stressful. A lot of headaches and stuff when I went over because it's different. Constantly being on patrol all the time. It weighs on you and you just get tired of people and everybody's you know out to get you. You think that and you're thinking stress. You're going to see the negative in the book says that too.

When I start to get, Well I guess you can say in our terms bitchy or if I feel myself getting very negative about every little thing or umm I call a mental health day.

So, I usually save a lot of my days.

I get a lot of bad headaches or just the tension right. Right here. And so, my main thing if I don't work out like if the guys know I'm not working out. They'll ask me if I'm okay. I'm like, no. I haven't been able to go to the gym and if something is going on and or whatever. So that's usually my thing if I realized I had been the gym in a week or so. And that always helps me. I if I don't go I can't get it out or whatever but usually I get those things in my neck like big knots and cricks.”

**Participant #M1**

“I guess the best way to describe it would be tension. As soon as the incident is over and we find out that the suspect we got them in custody or jail I mean the heart rate part of it is that it's no longer a factor but. When you look back on the incident and it feels like a weight is still pressing down on you. It's kind of hard to shake that weight.”

**Participant #M2**

“Well you can feel your face you feel the blood rushing to your face you get flushed, tunnel vision. Your blood pressure would shoot up your adrenaline. Like I said you talked about adrenaline dump you would feel this fight or flight syndrome right. Generally, you're ready to run or fight and then you might get headaches from that. Headaches and fatigue sleep. Being aggravated but you know agitated.”

**Participant #M3**

“You know you know elevated heart you know. Shortness of breath sweats. Sometimes nausea depending on what type of scene you're at the sudden dump of adrenaline that makes you sick. Well and then and then that headache comes certainly after. Yeah. And then when it's all said and done that that all that adrenaline is gone. And you have that same it's you know you have all that. It's exhaustion and it's like. And I mean in everyday life I don't know. Yeah well, I mean and everything's tense.”

**Participant #M4**

“I was mentally and physically drained. I could have just got to work and. You know I had slept, hadn't done anything leading up to work and I've been tired and I got to work and then you know I'm just exhausted mentally physically. And then. I would just get overwhelmed I just get anxious.

Sleep my head would race at night. But that's exactly what it was I mean, I was so tired but I could not go to sleep. My mind is just 100 miles an hour on everything that happened that day plus you know a hundred other days that I'd worked. Yeah, it was nonstop.”

**Participant #M5**

“Sleep, Yeah. I mean it depends if you had court the day before or you know it depends obviously on what shift you were working at times. Also. Like you said the type of call you know. If you're on a high-speed chase or you know, things like dealing with stuff. I think most of the guys are the ones that we all hated the most were the ones with little kids being injured and stuff like that. Then. You know having court the next day or being on the stand. You know. Court at, usually at 8:00, you go to the station turn your stuff and then. go to the DA's office or something and that was a long day. Then you go to sleep and then you have to go back to work. So, you lost sleep but then it would add a little bit to it. But you know, it was something you accepted in part of the job,

Umm, the back and you know you sit on the gun belt all the time and hanging and then. Just the stress going through your back in there. But. You know the thing is when you sit here and you see you think about it. Once again, it's kind of like okay this is my job. This is what you have. This is part of it. Okay, you have to chuckle because at the time I've been divorced twice and. At the time when you signed up for that position go then you realize you're going into a position that is about three- quarters alcoholism, divorce, and suicide. You know I was like. OK. But you know, you just kind of, there were some days that I think it was more from fatigue. You're just tired and then you have the headaches.”

#### **Participant #M6**

“I guess shakiness. Yeah, shaky. Sleep, you know sometimes. Yeah, I get that. Yeah, I think I got ADHD. Yes, my mind sometimes races.”

#### **Gender Affected by Stress**

The question was asked to understand how gender plays a role in work stress for each of the participants. Females reported as being psychological talkers while the males reported being masculine enforcers. Females were better at talking through stressful situations. The male police officers reported internalizing stressful situations. However, while working together each gender offered specific skills during stressful job situations. Some of the underlying themes for females were: female roles, judged, more work stress than males; mother role at work, psychological talkers, stress eater, weight, stereotype, emotional and better listeners. The themes identified for the males were: that females are

challenged more, carry their workload, male health, anger; internalize; role of a male; and block things out.

**Participant #F1**

“But our girls carry their load more than the man ever did. They did slough off. Because we knew. or I knew that I felt like I was being judged harder. And don't luff off the hard stuff on the guys so I always tried to carry my load. I think so because a mom's position in life is different. It's different being a mama police officer than a daddy because of gender roles. Yeah because dads are certain things but mom is what are we having for supper; Who's getting them to the doctor; Who's dealing with the teacher. So, we already have more stress being either a single parent or a married Mama. So, we automatically have that extra stress on us. And. How is my gender affecting my work-related? You know I've got to deal with work stress on top of the other stress. I am a mother to some co-workers. Yes, my role is PIO/psychologist. When they come up and just start talking about random stuff I know about 10 or 15 minutes it's gonna get to what's bothering them and then we deal with it. I had to teach myself that if it doesn't directly affect me then I need to stop worrying about it when it comes to things here.”

**Participant #F2**

“I mean I'm kind of stress eater. So, my weight has fluctuated. To good and bad. I just dropped 65 pounds. Oh yeah. I don't even feel a whole lot of stress at work.



Because unless I'm on a particular call, when I first started, I was a hard charger. I mean served warrants like crazy I arrested anybody and everybody I could. I led the department one year in arrests for warrants and criminal and all together. But I thought I was untouchable because I didn't think anything could happen. So, I mean it wouldn't be anything for me to charge in the house by myself if I need to serve a warrant. But now, of course, I'm a lot more careful.”

**Participant #F3**

“No difference.”

**Participant #F4**

“Well, there is a stereotype that you know... Even if I pull up and have a male officer he is getting ready to hook this person up for whatever you know basically take him to jail and they see him come in and you know immediately produce tears and I really don't care if they cry and I'm all told that you know but like I think they tend to think since we have an emotion or we tend to be more emotional creatures rather than your male counterpart that we're softer. So, I think that's why I liked ...some of the most freaking evil people ever dealt with female officers.

So, I think a lot of it is just we're just emotional way anyway. And there's a reason why we're not in combat.

I think we just we're geared that way to be this is how we are. I mean so females typically are and men are typically a little more uh I guess what would you say.

Not distant but removed from. Yeah emotionally removed. They don't I have the same and then you throw in our menstrual stuff and then if you're the mom you're worried about that or divorced. But overall, I believe we all experience the same crap. Men tend not to talk about it like women tend to want to talk about it. But it's funny. I will present myself to them at any time I've had them call me off duty guys. Hey, I need some life something you know your life advice. Yeah. Life advice. Okay. So, I'll tell them that it's you know it's not normal for us to not in our culture to talk about I need help or I need to talk about it. But it's good. So. And I think. If we all would just have friends outside of law enforcement we would be just fine but we tend to flock to our own.”

**Participant #M1**

“with a man, they are going to challenge her because they think they can overtake her. I think that the female officers are viewed by male suspects particularly male suspects who will probably fight. I think the female officers are challenged much more than the male officers because they think that they think that they're an easy target and they can overtake them much more easily than a male officer.

No challenges between males and females”

**Participant #M2**

“I don't really notice anything different but yeah. You know didn't notice anything at all between at least here locally that there's any difference. when you receive a call, you're expected whether it be male or female to do your part, carry your load.

And our officers have always been pretty clear about voicing their opinion. If you're not doing your share they'll let you know. So.”

**Participant #M3**

“Oh, I think males I think you know. In law enforcement you know I think. Alcoholism is high divorce is high. You know I mean it's a running joke. That. When you go to training. You know the common. Phrases are This is your first marriage so you're on your starter wife. You know I think you know just health. Overweight, high blood pressure, high cholesterol. They are all for males. I think of anger. You know I think I think anger is one. Thing. That happens because we like you said we internalize.”

**Participant #M4**

“I was always brought up to where. The male is the provider. Now the female can work have a job have a career but the male is the overall provider like he's the protector. He needs to take care of most of the bills. The money part was fine. But. I wasn't helping around the house. You know my mom, my dad, my grandparents it was a 50/50 thing. You know my granddad would help clean my dad helps clean cook everything. And I didn't for the longest time. Now you know, I pull my weight at home. You know I'll do whatever needs to be done. I get off work now about an hour and a half two hours before my wife does. And I usually get quite a bit of stuff done between the time I get off work and she gets

home. So it's she usually can come home and relax. As far as like work-related stresses. Being a protector, I guess is what the male is supposed to be.

Before I can I won't say block it out but it affected me I was like you know it sad.

But now that I've had a son. I just keep thinking to myself how can someone do that to a child. And it's. That's one of the things that stress me out at work.

I mean it bothers me because I'm still like you know how can someone do that to a child. Thinking about my son. But I don't carry it as I did.”

### **Participant #M5**

“I was always, always one that was more laid back than others. They try to. You know. Stop feeling like they said for me. Everybody has a call that you know bugs them.”

"You see yourself being more protective of the female. My first wife was a deputy. And she got mad at me because I felt that yes there is a place for females in law enforcement. You know they can do probably 80 percent of the job. But when you go into a certain situation she got mad at me one time because I told her I would rather have a guy by my sides backing me up. I mean, she didn't like that at all, you know. And I know they got the same stuff on their belt as we do but I'm sorry when you walk into a situation. You know it's just how I feel. As for, do I think we handle it differently, I don't. Know. Like you said I'm an old school. That was part of my job suck it up. Do your job and don't complaining. Women on the other hand, sometimes are more emotional. I mean they cry more and

women are emotional and men introverts. They internalize things. You know. And women are good at talking things out with the criminal or whatever. And. You know I saw the tension in the partnership. I think it's changed a lot. Because even now it's common the female cops taking a leave of absence for maternity leave. I think it's changed a lot. everybody said the same thing on their belts now and now they have even more stuff on their belt. So, the thing is which I always thought.”

### **Participant #M6**

“Yeah, Females were some of the worst fights I have ever been in. I know some black women just beat me up all over the place. Yeah. I handle stress pretty well.”

### **Coping Mechanisms**

Both male and female participants identified both healthy and unhealthy coping mechanisms for dealing with work stress. The theme identified was a coping mechanism. The nodes identified for both males and females were (a) mental positive/negative, (b) nutrition healthy/unhealthy, (c) physical negative/positive. Unhealthy coping mechanism reported were: stress eating, cursing, avoidance, lashing out, and agitation. Healthy mechanisms reported were typically after a difficult call included: working crossword puzzles, rattling or checking to see if doors are secured, and walking, pets, family time, exercise, tactical breathing, listening to music, parking, and disconnecting from the incident, using iPhone, and spending time with family. Males also reported using self-

control; talking to other police officers; jokes; prescribed medication; not taking it personally; motorcycle riders; and reading the Bible.

Table 5

*Identified Coping Mechanisms by Gender*

Coping mechanisms	Male	Female
Unhealthy		
Stress eating	X	X
Cursing	X	X
Agitation	X	X
Avoidance	X	X
Lashing out	X	X
Healthy		
Crossword puzzles		X
Rattling/checking doors		X
Walking	X	X
Pets		X
Family time	X	X
Exercise	X	X
Tactical breathing	X	X
Listening to music	X	X
Parking	X	X
Disconnecting	X	X
Using iPhone	X	X
Self-control	X	X
Talking to peers	X	X
Jokes	X	X
Medication	X	X
Not taking personal	X	X
Spending time with family	X	X
Motorcycle rides		X
Reading the Bible		X

**Participant #F1**

“I kept crossword puzzles before the iPhone days. Literally, I'd sit there and I'd just find a place to park those at night or third shift I'd just rattle doors and go for a walk. I walk around this building every once in a while. I knew where to park so people wouldn't see me. Just sit there and stare out the window at the park or a boat ramp. Look at the pretty scenery just sit there and stare. Zone out. Yeah. So that's maybe because that's the only effective ones I had that others were eating, cursing (laughing)... I am right!? Eating and cursing are the ineffective ways you like it. Yeah. Yeah, I had to stop the cursing for the most part. I had to teach myself that if it doesn't directly affect me then I need to stop worrying about it when it comes to things here. because we have something people that just gripe and growl about the silliest stuff I say is that the only thing you have bothering you in life. You just have to learn to ignore them and realize they just bitch and moan about everything. Yeah but I've learned to stop. well, I figured out a lot of them. If I came to them wouldn't be as receptive or helpful so I and I am no longer investing too much of myself into anybody's issues. We kind of stay on our own little islands. I have mine right up here in the corner. Doors closed a lot of times but people whom I want to know, know they just open the door people will just run that over the top of you.”

**Participant #F2**



“I mean I'm kind of stress eater. So, my weight has fluctuated. To good and bad. I just dropped 65 pounds. Oh yeah. I mean I just dropped 65 to get to this. I don't feel a lot of stress outside of work. I mean I'm a single parent so my kid hasn't caught the brunt of anything. Well, I live on my phone. So, I mean I'm at this if it's not in my hand I'm usually is in the car right now so I'm kind of lost without it. It's charging. But. I'm kind of like everyone I'll go find a place to sit... and uh... just not think about... try not to think about things and just zoned out for a while. I used to meditate. You know I have a friend who's acupuncture and she's all in that alternative health and homeopathic stuff. So, she's got me set up with supplements and homeopathic remedies. So, she takes care of me that way. Yeah. Plus, I live on a horse farm too so I go outside and I can feed horses and just take care of them all day. I will ride horses. Yeah. My friend told me to do something that you love to do. So, I said I was going to go for a bike rack but I didn't want to mess with it. I saddled up and went on a horseback ride.”

### **Participant #F3**

“I mean and you know I have gotten that my whole career but even now even I've been working out in the gym and stuff and people have noticed the change. Like in my arms and my chest and stuff. I guess I mean I was prepared before but I just feel like I'm more mentally focused now because I'm reliving all of this stress that I deal with.

The music in my car in my cruiser. You probably hear a lot of people say that like I'm a music lover I'd rather have. Like my stereo is on right now and my dog is at home. My tv is on and stereo is on because the dogs are at home. He's lying in his kennel probably waiting for me to come home for lunch. I got a little chihuahua but I'm a music lover. I go to concerts like I say when I take a shower or listen to music when I come home I listen to music. I very rarely watch TV. I do in the evening times as I go to the gym come home to cook some dinner and I watch maybe an hour or two a TV and I go to bed. But literally, my stress relief is once I get off that call I play some kind of music. I mean I've got playlists for days on my phone. I'm a country music lover. I listen to pretty much anything like things and I can relate to dependent on what. I guess the atmosphere I'm going to be in if I'm in a club or a bar which I don't get out much anymore. As far as doing that kind of thing, now and then normally it's dinner and a cocktail or whatever, I have had two drinks for 14 weeks of working out I have not had the desire to... I may have like a Bloody Mary or Cocktail now and then or something.”

**Participant #F4**

“Me just bottom and everything up. I'd come home just sit on the couch not say anything that wants to do anything I just wanted to be at home.

Yes. We're going to say well we talk to our buddy... I got one.

It's helped me disconnect but it helps me not think so deep into it. Yeah. As far as like. The meds that I'm taking I've had no side effects. It's good. I mean it's all for the better. So that's one good thing about it.

Sleep my head would race at night. I was so tired but I could not go to sleep. My mind is just 100 miles an hour on everything that happened that day plus you know a hundred other days that I'd worked. Yeah, it was nonstop. Since my new meds, I'm able to go home and go to sleep. I mean usually.

I do tactical breathing that's taught at the academy. I do it from call to call too. Usually, I will do four breaths. That's what I'll do. Like four tactical breaths, you know in nose and mouth or I cuss. So, like tactical breathing helps when I'm on the job. Fitness is big for me.

What it was I didn't actually like lash out like beat my wife. I remove... you become isolated because the wife didn't understand and all that and then she wanted me to quit all that shit and so I was like no. Well then, we ended up divorcing and then like one thing is the school job. I mean I'm pretty laid back pretty patient person anyway but you know sometimes if I don't get just a few hours for some I mean the books say about 18 to 24 hours to come down.

In my role as a policeman a little bit different now too. It's not as stressful.”

### **Participant #M1**

“I work 10 years on a third shift so my best coping mechanism was to just find an empty parking lot that was lit so I could see anybody coming around me and just

sit there and stare out into the darkness and I wouldn't think about it. You know I was just kind of like. My mind was just a blank chalkboard and nothing was there and I just. I just did that for a while until. I just sort of you know let it go. And then I would move on but. North Middle School track is also good. It was a good way. And you know. Nobody else around as a male night completely dark out there and just walk around the track a few times. Those were the ways that I usually dealt with it.

In when the weather's decent. We walk quite often sometimes. Another four days a week so. I would say between walking and walk and work out when the weather's decent I get in a good five sometimes six.”

### **Participant #M2**

“I prayed and I read the word and read the Bible. And my source was a spiritual nature. Because I'm a Christian. They kept me. Kept me centered. That was my release and I exercise course too. But. I feel like a policeman is like. Like a pastor. Or a teacher or. There's a calling. And I don't believe that everyone should be a policeman and I don't believe everyone should be a pastor and I believe everyone should be a teacher. I believe God puts callings. To help me make the right decisions. All police officers have their definition of what they call a good police officer. We go to church together. That's what we do. My wife likes to cook. I play golf and. I have friends we take a motorcycle ride we go off on vacation. I

have guys, Pastors, we go off on vacations. So, what I and my wife do we go to movies and we go out to dinner. That's what we do together.”

**Participant #M3**

“I was a stress eater. Oh yeah. You know I mean. but you know for me to cope was is it was probably more avoidance. Than coping. You know I would go to their activities and then I would you know be the I'm not overly involved because that's not me. But I would. You know vicariously. Everything would be focused on them and what they were doing here and you know and everything else is sort of. You know at the office. My kids will tell you and they told me you know how I changed at home. And there to you know again I was medicated cause there at the end you know my kids would say that. You're not being very nice and my wife is like, why are you acting like a bear. Why are you ripping their heads off over that? I still remember my youngest son. Asking me to go out and throw the football. And., I turned around and said, And I just snarled. I mean I was just like. I don't want to go out and throw the football right now just leave me alone. I was like my wife looked at me and my older kids looked at me and I was like. Oh, I need help. So again, I again not saying pills are. The answer to everything but it certainly took my edge.”

**Participant #M4**

“Inappropriate jokes. Yeah. I mean very inappropriate jokes. Mainly there's two guys I work with and We're best friends I guess. We have our own. Group text

that if we want to say something that's too inappropriate we'll send it a text.

Because we'd get in trouble for it. My big thing is I control from my mouth a lot.

Disconnect pretty much.

As far as like off duty stuff I detail cars on the side and then I also do some light mechanic work stuff like that. Go four-wheeling riding and hunting and fishing.

Or me a warm summer in Spring and fall and before I'm quite a bit mean the two guys I work with. And then I try to exercise but my and other than that, just watch TV or. Just hang out.”

#### **Participant #M5**

“Exercise and some exercise. I raced mountain bikes. I mean I had. A lot of Other activities a very active outside.

It wasn't a day there are some days that. You just do that and then once again go back on raw conversations in the locker room or conversations decision in roll call before row call started. You know. Just like. We'd get there before row call so that was our time to vent. I'm a very big guy. I can't go there, I won't but I choose to control myself. It's not worth it. I try and keep it as cool as possible and think things through, it's not worth it.”

#### **Participant #M6**

“Yes, sleeping was here just recently. You know just lately, that. I mean, I've never really had sleep issues before just recently you know that's another story though. That's not a police story.

You know because to me it was almost like a big game. I mean it was. Their job is their own. My job is to catch them. I mean, it's not personal.

It's just like I was saying earlier you know I don't care if someone insults me or screams at me I expect them to. I mean it's almost. Like they're supposed to lie.

I'm supposed to do this and this is just a big game and. You know so none of that bothered me any. I mean the only times that bothered me.

I guess that's a stress thing you just get out and do stuff like exercise a lot. You know I used to exercise. Not used to. I used to not exercise but I was always just active. Now I'm so active but not I try to make a conscious effort to exercise. and not that's really for stress just doing something. I'd say it's good for you. To run and stuff. The whole time I'm running I'm thinking man I hate this. I try to run every day. I like bicycling better though.”

### **Summary**

In Chapter 4, I presented data on the lived experiences of male and female police officers regarding work-related stresses. The interviews were conducted and allowed the police officers to tell their personal stories. The signs and symptoms for each participant provided insight as to how stress affects their mental and physical well-being. Both male and female participants addressed how gender roles are perceived as different; however, job duties are the same for both genders. Finally, several participants reported using methods, such as disconnecting and/or exercising, as a form of coping mechanism to handle work stress.

In this chapter, I identified males' and females' perceptions of the job. The female participants reported feeling more stress because of their dual roles as mother, the caretaker at work, others not pulling their workload, disrespect, and expectation of the job. The males reported being worried about the females during stressful and dangerous calls, harm to partner, the unknown call, and serious calls.

Sleep disturbances were also reported in the study. Most of the participants reported having some sort of difficulty or disturbance with sleep, such as mind racing, difficulty falling asleep, or staying asleep. The participants that reported sleep difficulties also reported the lack of sleep had a negative impact on their mental and physical health. They reported being tired, agitated, and lack of energy. The study indicated that the consequences of poor sleep also affected work performance and family life.

The final results of this study include that the police officers, regardless of gender, are exposed to significant stress in their work and family and social life. Although the expectations of their job duties are the same, each gender experiences and handles stress differently. There were no reported gender differences regarding job duties. In this study, the majority reported females being more of the psychological talkers than their counterparts. The females were better at talking through stressful situations. The majority of the males reported they internalized their stress. The participants all reported the shared love of their job and respect for the uniform. All the participants reported using healthy coping mechanisms to help decrease job-related stresses.



The lived experiences of police officers brought forth many results and themes from the questions. In Chapter 5, I interpret my findings and provide a discussion of the lived experiences in the jobs of police officers stress. In Chapter 5, I also discuss the recommendations, limitations, and social implications of the study.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of the study was to examine the participants' personal experiences, perceptions, and what motivates them in an effort to have a better understanding of their experiences. Differences in gender-related stressors affecting work performance were also examined in the study. Qualitative literature examining gender and work-related stress associated with police work is limited. Future qualitative studies are needed to evaluate how work stress affects performance, sleep, and family life in male and female police officers. Qualitative research involving the effects of work-related stress in the law enforcement area is lacking and under-researched. Further studies need to focus on not only the effects of how stress affects police work, but also better ways to cope with work stress to institute better wellness programs that involve law enforcement departments in their entirety, to include dispatchers and family members.

Creswell (2013) suggested that in the theoretical framework, the researcher devises a theory in which phenomenon is supported, predicted, and understood. The idea is to link the researcher with current knowledge that is guided by theory. The theory for this particular study suggests the ability for a person to adjust to stressors and challenges (see De Terte & Stephens, 2014). Yet, some police officers still do not report concerns and issues due to stereotyping, loss of career, and or negative feedback from peers and administration. Maran et al. (2015) conducted a quantitative study on the effects of stress exposure. The study concluded that women police officers handle more stress to achieve

acceptance and esteem. The male police officers expressed more concern about their female partners on a difficult run. A qualitative narrative approach was used to plan the course of action for this research study. The research paradigm also represented a course of action of an idea or an assumption and suggests that the research knows the objective (Creswell, 2013). There are few qualitative studies where police officers tell their stories about job stressors that affect their physical and mental health and home life. The participants in this study talked about how stress affects their work and home life during their interviews and the importance of changing their wellness program to help minimize the negative effects of stress during their careers as police officers and for their families. Families often are faced with dealing with the issues their loved ones brought home after a stressful day. Therefore, it is important to include the families as part of the wellness program that offer referrals and or resources for help.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

To address the research question in the study, the following questions were asked of each participant during the interviews:

1. While on duty, what are your experiences regarding the effects that increase your stress?
2. While on duty, what is your experience regarding signs or symptoms of stress?
3. What is your experience regarding how your gender is affected by work-related stresses?

4. While on duty, what is your experience regarding effective coping mechanisms help you to manage your stress?

### **Research Question**

The research question that guided this study was, “What are the lived experiences of how work stress affects performance, sleep, and family life in male and female police officers?” Previous studies of stress in law enforcement were quantitative. These quantitative studies provided numerical information on the effects of stress in law enforcement on gender, sleep, and family. However, few studies provided qualitative research explaining how the police officers' personal experiences are affected by job stress. The quantitative studies in the area of wellness programs showed that many officers were in favor of having better programs focusing on optimal wellness. For this study, the participants were in favor of adopting better wellness programs. During the interviews, the officers identified areas of their current program that need to be evaluated. For example, to include more options and referrals for women's health and family wellness.

### **Work-Related Stress**

All the participants reported their job as a police officer was stressful. Although participants reported loving their job as a police officer, they identified differences in stress based on gender. Females reported differences as emotional drain and some, while on duty, depersonalization toward other police officers. Several female officers reported being in a “mother role” because other officers sought advice, direction, or someone to

talk to for guidance. The male police officers reported much respect for the female officers, worrying about their well-being was a priority in a difficult situation like shootings and/or domestic violence calls. All the males reported great concern for their female partner's well-being during a difficult run. All the female officers reported concerns with pulling their weight, being stereotyped, and being treated equally. The police officers all reported using positive coping mechanisms to deal with stress after a difficult call. Some of the reports included sitting in an empty parking lot and disconnecting, walking the beat and checking doors, listening to music, working out, crossword puzzles or playing on a phone, and meditation. Several also reported talking with other police officers about the incident. These coping mechanisms mentioned were positive choices to help decrease stress levels after a difficult call or workday.

### **Health Concerns**

Preceding literature supports the negative influences of critical incidents on officer psychophysical stress levels (Kutz, 2012). The study indicated that work environments are connected with the increases in stress in law enforcement. Both male and female participants reported high levels of stress, strains on family life, and sleep problems. Physical issues reported among the genders were neck, knee, hip, headaches and back pain. Both male and female officers reported heart racing and or feeling shaky during intense calls. Sleep was identified as being one of the top problems. The problems identified with sleep included: fatigue, difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, broken sleep, mind racing, and lost sleep because of having to be in court the next morning after

working the night shift. Several participants reported sleep issues to their primary physicians and placed on medication to decrease symptoms of anxiety and sleep issues. However, none of the officers interviewed reported misuse of drugs or alcohol to deal with these stressors. It is plausible that the participants were less likely to report the misuse of drugs and or alcohol due to the possible negative impact on their jobs and random drug tests with the department.

### **Family**

Both male and female participants reported issues with work and family balance. Female officers experience higher levels of stress, such as family and home obligations (see Kutz, 2012). Earlier studies showed that female police officers were expected to uphold domestic responsibilities as a mother, wife, and caregiver (Kutz, 2012). In one study, females police officer was viewed as primary caretakers in a family role and men were the bread winners (McCarthy, 2013). Having dual roles in law enforcement caused added stress at work and home life. For this study, the female officers reported higher levels of stress than the males because of family responsibilities, such as taking children to doctor's appointments, sporting events, school functions, homework, and preparing meals. Females reported feeling more stress going from the role of a police officer to caretaker. The male participants agreed that females also have responsibilities as being a mother, wife, and a police officer were challenging.

Both male and female officers reported concerns about strains placed on family members because of their jobs. All of the male participants reported internalizing their

stressors because they did not want to relive the events of their day and expose their spouses to the stressful events from their day.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework used was a qualitative narrative approach based on the resilience theory. The theory suggests that individuals are capable of adjusting to situations producing stressors and challenges affecting work, health, family, and financial issues (De Terte & Stephens, 2014). The research problem compared stress between genders and work performances in police officers. Further research on the need for police officer's shift work has on gender, health, and family to understand how to create a healthier balance in work and family life. Creswell's (2013) method explains how the course of action for the research or to represent a course of action about an idea or assumption that proposes research understands the objective. The concept connected the study with a modern understanding that was led by the theory. It also allowed each individual to tell his and her lived experience as police officers. The officers provided input on what changes need to be made to develop a better wellness program for the department. The wellness program may offer incentives for police officers who do not miss work, such as, additional time off. More options for wellness to include women's health; current education on the importance of maintaining mental and physical health; stop smoking and weight loss programs; and free gym access.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The sample in the study was not characteristics of all police officers in the Midwest. Measures of social and administrative characters were vastly intercorrelated. Meaning, that city officials and community influence were an influential factor, therefore, they could not be examined separately. Society and officials influence police departments through monies, rules, and regulations. This would suggest that the participants were still somewhat guarded when identifying job-related stressors. The limitation would also include that it is essential to further identify additional types of influences on stress in women, for example, the effects of maternity, menopause, and child care while on duty. These stresses were identified by several female police officers during the interviews.

### **Recommendations**

Although male and female officers were exposed to the same types of stressors, there were some gender differences in how stresses were handled. The study revealed that each gender handled their stressors specific to themselves. Both male and female officers used positive coping techniques, such as, parking in an empty lot or watching the river to disconnect from the incident. Walking, working out, and or talking about the incident with peers were positive coping techniques used by each gender. However, male and female officers were more concerned about the quality of their wellness program to include supporting working mothers, flex-time options, and resources to talk about stressors. Other areas gender-specific areas were set shift schedules to create more balance in work and family life; maternity accommodations, such as maternity uniforms and nursing rooms for new mothers; paid maternity leave; and daycare resources or



accommodations. It is recommended that both genders should incorporate self-check-ins in their daily routines. Self-check-ins can help to identify and immediately address the issue causing the stress. Self-check-ins can be accomplished by the officer and with a trained officer in charge following a critical situation.

Stress should be handled proactively. Police departments need to recognize the risks of stress for their officers. They need to take initiative in decreasing or eliminating the causes that are controlled by department. It would also be feasible for the department to understand how group-specific differences are influenced by work-stress. Also, the importance of developing interventions that would minimize or reduce issues associated with job stress experienced by genders of police officers.

Exercise is an important component for maintaining good health and wellness in law enforcement. It allows the officers to do their jobs safely. Majority of the female and three male officers' identified weight issues as a stressor. Exercise and relaxation techniques help reduce stress. It also helps support the immune system by reducing stress. Exercise helps in the prevention of chronic diseases associated with police work-related stress, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and depression, as well as, support the immune system and is a great stress release (McCanlies et al., 2012).

Recommendations for male and female officers suggest practicing emotional control. Emotional control in law enforcement consists of oneself and others. Problems begin when emotional control becomes skeptical or cynical that the officers' emotional life becomes constrained. Thus, the officer finds it difficult to open up or find ways to

express normal emotional feelings, for instance, fear, resentment, frustration, or grief. Male and female officers can build resiliency by taking responsibility for managing personality-based coping propensities, behavior, and attitude that drive them; gain skills in the regulation of emotions, and lessening negative emotions. It is most important not to fall into blaming everything on the job mentality. Develop coping skills for managing mental wellness, such as deep breathing techniques or mindfulness are recommended to help the officers refocus to create balance. Identify unconstructive attitudes and develop better communication skills for on the job and with family. Police officers can learn to manage differences positively through problem-solving techniques and education to help reduce stigma associated with mental health by developing training programs to support gender roles in the department. This can help in creating and maintaining balance in job, health, and family to managing stress. Most importantly, for the officer to know when to seek counseling and or peer counseling when deemed necessary. Training the police officers to identify and manage their stress can be empowering. It allows the officer to take control of his or her mental and physical health.

As I completed the final segment of the study, I identified the need to prioritize and develop a wellness plan within the department because of the majority responses from the participants. These four areas were identified in the interviews to be the most important. The wellness plan consists of four areas of the research that can be accomplished for a department without exhausting the budget. These tasks include (a)

internal debriefing members, (b) acknowledging human element, (c) wellness programs, and (d) debriefing of other involved personnel.

### **Expanded Debriefing**

Initiate an informal debriefing after a traumatic event or run. After a critical situation, the person in charge would have an informal check-in or talk with everyone on that shift. Checking in suggests asking how each officer is doing while observing for signs of stress, allow for input of the run, evaluate what was positive and needs improvement on. It would allow the officers to deescalate and reduce some stress from the run. This could be achieved as a group and individually. It is also imperative to call in a Critical Incident Team, or CIST, when a critical situation occurs. Typically, the CIS team has to be called due to travel time (Fletcher, Hooper, Dunican, & Kogi, 2015). The critical incident team allows for the responders to express their part of the incident, acknowledge human distress, and to provide support and guidance to process the information shared from the run (Fletcher et al., 2015). However, a local team can be established with retired police officers, reserve officers, local psychologist or mental health and health professionals who are willing to volunteer their time to help.

### **Human Factor**

It is important to acknowledge human factors with police officers. Which are physical and mental relationships between humans and the environment. Law enforcement personnel are human with feelings and emotions. Administration in law enforcement need to be cognizant of the fact that police officers and dispatchers can also

be affected by stressful events from the job and personal life. An example may be when a police officer responds to a call involving a child. Often, police officers associate these incidents involving children with their children, resulting in heightening their own emotions and feelings. Dispatchers are impacted by stress because they are the link between the caller and police officer. Or perhaps the officer has their personal experience that resonates with the current situation. Because these types of calls affect an officer or dispatcher emotionally, often the call is difficult to shake off. This is where the shift leader needs to check-in and be open to talking to the individual about the run instead of advising the officer or dispatcher to shake it off. Peer support programs can be utilized when critical incidents occur to help minimize the effects of the trauma. It can also help the officer in charge, who is trained, to identify if there is a need for further evaluation by a mental health professional and or psychologist with police culture experiences.

Addressing stigma associated with these types of stress can be achieved through adopting a more positive culture within the police department to include administrative, police, and other law enforcement personnel, such as dispatchers. Creating positive culture starts with listening and acknowledging the officers' concerns. This can help to build resilience and provide teaching moments in the police department. Through teaching and education, the use of positive interpersonal skills, such as, assertiveness, anger management, and ethical conflict compromise would create more of a realistic work and family balance strategies to deal with work-related stresses.

## **Wellness Programs**

Wellness programs need to be specific for each police department. One size does not fit all. It is the responsibility of the department to customize their wellness programs to better suit their departments. Physical fitness with optimal health is highly important in the career of a police officer to carry out job duties, protect, and to serve their community. To perform these job duties, the officer must mentally and physically prepare. These actions require being consistent in the maintaining of optimal wellness, hence the need to have good wellness programs in effect. Suggestions for a wellness program may include: the ability to utilize the department's gym when the officer is on lunch or after hours; checking out local gyms to see if they would offer membership at a discounted rate or free access; educating police officers on mindfulness; utilizing breathing; and relaxation or meditation techniques. Tracking stress in a journal can help identify types of incidents that cultivate problematic stress. Developing healthy responses to stress can also be utilized and written down in a journal. Simple solutions can be accomplished by revisiting their handbooks on the emotional survival section. Utilizing appropriate mental health professionals for gender, for example, a police psychologist trained in the police culture and the importance of self-care. The wellness program can educate officers about their responsibility for maintaining self-care after a difficult run. Self-care can be achieved by checking-in throughout the shift or day to identify what the officer needs to address to reduce stress.

**Other Involved Personnel**

Treating the law enforcement agency entirely is crucial after a critical incident or run. Dispatchers are often left out of the critical incident debriefing process. Dispatchers are the connection between the caller and the police officer dispatched to the incident. When a 911 call enters into the system, a dispatcher follows that call from start to finish. These calls are detailed and sometimes graphic in nature. These types of calls can be distressful and emotionally upsetting to the dispatcher resulting in traumatizing effects. Dispatchers are often missed or left out of the debriefings because they are not always trained police officers. When a critical incident occurs, all participants must be included in the debriefings and as part of the peer program.

**Implications**

Although specific interventions and coping strategies are essential for decreasing police officer stress in gender, modifications in the administrative perspective also merit consideration. To recognize the significance of plausible stress predictors in men and women would suggest that there is a difference in these stress predictors. There is also the need to develop and test interventions to reduce work-related stressors while on duty, decrease the stigma regarding mental health, and to provide police officers with other options over their wellness, such as incentives for wellness and to include family members in future research.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the lived experiences of how work stress affects performance, sleep, and family life in male and female police officers. Working in law enforcement means paying a price because of the physical and mental tolls of the job. All police officers are exposed to daily stressors on the job that consists of the ensured safety and protection in the community. They are also expected to foster respectable community relationships while upholding and maintain law and order.

Police officers are exposed to extended periods of stress while on the job. It is imperative to understand the risks of job-related stresses by identifying the predictors among gender. By identifying stress predictors, better wellness programs can be implemented to meet the needs of the police officers and other emergency personnel, such as dispatcher to reduce the effects of job stress. This could be accomplished by developing organizational strategies in the departments to support the use of partnerships and problem-solving practices to address these issues. It would also allow police officers' to collaborate with the administration and to be proactive in the development of a better wellness program. It would also empower the officers knowing they are taking steps to decrease or eradicate the causes of stress that they have control over.

Family support should also be included in the wellness program. The participants deal with work stress by disconnecting from their families. Family communication and functions often diminish or cease because the officer becomes despondent to their feelings and emotions. Family members know their loved ones better than anyone. Thus,

recognizing when their loved one needs to seek additional help from a health professional could minimize the effects of long-term stress and negative coping mechanisms, for example, suicide or drug and alcohol usage.

Police officers are at risk for mental and physical health issues due to the persistent exposure to work stresses. The participants in this study shared their personal experiences of how it has affected their being and family life. While all expressed the love of the uniform, maintaining mental and physical wellness was of most importance. All the participants expressed their concerns and the need to revise the current wellness program to achieve optimal health, job performances, and better family life balance.



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## Appendix A

**CONSENT FORM***A Qualitative Study in Law Enforcement Stress Between Gender and Work Performance*

You are invited to take part in a research study about law enforcement stress between gender and work performance. The researcher is inviting male and female police officers currently working in law enforcement to be in the study. When not recruiting face-to-face, add: I obtained your name/contact info via phone or email. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part. A researcher named Angelia Harger who is in the PhD Forensic Psychology program at Walden University is conducting this study.

**Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to examine the participant’s personal experience, perception, and what motivates them in efforts to have a better understanding of the experience. It will also examine whether or not there are differences in gender- related stressors affecting work performance.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to: volunteer for this study, you will participate in an individual interview lasting approximately one hour in length for the interview. The interview will be done in agreement with the participant’s time.

Here are some sample questions:

- What are the lived experiences of how work stress affects performance, sleep, and family life in male and female police officers?

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

This study is voluntary. You are free to accept or turn down the invitation. No one at the police department will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to be in the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as becoming stressed, anxious, or upset. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

By taking part in the study, you will be helping other

**Payment:**

There are no payments to be made to the participants.

**Privacy:**

Reports coming out of this study will not share the identities of individual participants. Details that might identify participants, such as the location of the study, also will not be shared. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purpose outside of this research project. Data will be kept secure by data security measures, including password protection, data encryption with fingerprint, and use of codes in place of names, storing names separately from the data, and discarding names. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the Research Participant Advocate at my university at 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date**.

The participant will be provided a copy of this agreement.

**Obtaining Your Consent**

If you feel you understand the study well enough to make a decision about it, please indicate your consent by signing below.

Signature section.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

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## A Letter of Cooperation from a Research Partner

Chief Heath Cox [HACox@cityofhendersonky.org](mailto:HACox@cityofhendersonky.org)

Jason M. Hargitt >[jmhargitt@cityofhendersonky.org](mailto:jmhargitt@cityofhendersonky.org)

July 19, 2018

Dear Angelia Harger,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled, “A Qualitative Study in Law Enforcement Stress Between Gender and Work Performance” within the Henderson Police Department. As part of this study, I authorize you to send out the letter about the research study. The participants will be given your email address by Chief Jason Hargitt from Henderson Police Department to respond to you directly if they would like to volunteer for the study. As the researcher, you will be the only one to know who is participating in the study. As the researcher, you will be handling all interviews and data collection. Participants will be identified by a number. The data will be audio recorded and documented via notetaking. The handwritten notes will then be transcribed via computer. The transcripts of the recorded interviews will be typed out for each participant and save to the researcher’s hard drive.

The data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home office. Any information on the computer will be password protected. All participant’s personal information will be confidential and not part of the report information. The cabinet in the office will be locked and only accessible to the researcher. The researcher will check the data for accuracy. Participants will also review their interviews in order to double check for accuracy. The data will be kept in the locked file cabinet for five years post study and then the data will be shredded.

Each participant will complete a consent form before engaging in the research and the confidentiality of the participants will be assured. If a participant expresses concern regarding feelings of any distress the participant is free to stop the interview at any time and will be given a list of local mental health resources in the area. All participant information will be kept confidential and

their participation is completely voluntary. Once the information is collected, coded and clustered, the report data and themes will be given to Henderson Police Department.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include the following: identifying potential participants including male and female police officers, a private conference room for the interviews, resources to mental health professionals if requested by the participant, and supervision from Chief Jason Hargitt if indicated. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the student will not be naming our organization in the doctoral project report that is published in ProQuest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Jason M. Hargitt  
Acting Chief of Police

Henderson Police Department  
1990 Barret Court  
Henderson, Ky. 42420  
[jmhargitt@cityofhendersonky.org](mailto:jmhargitt@cityofhendersonky.org)  
TX # 270-831-1295  
FAX # 270-831-1294



### 134th AOC

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### **Research Question in Proposal**

What are the lived experiences of how work stress affects performance, sleep, and family life in male and female police officers?

### **Interview Questions**

RESEARCH QUESTION 1 – What are the lived experiences between genders in regards to stress within law enforcement?

SUBQUESTION 1 - While on duty, what is your experiences regarding the effects that increase your stress?

SUBQUESTION 2 – While on duty, what is your experience regarding signs or symptoms of stress?

SUBQUESTION 3 – What is your experience regarding how your gender is affected by work-related stresses?

SUBQUESTION 4 – While on duty, what is your experience regarding effective coping mechanisms help you to manage your stress?