STRESS AND COPING AMONG

POLICE OFFICERS IN

RURAL OKLAHOMA

By

KYLE SCOTT PAGE

Bachelor of Art in Psychology & German

University of Tulsa

Tulsa, OK

2006

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
July, 2008

STRESS AND COPING AMONG

POLICE OFFICERS IN

RURAL OKLAHOMA

Thesis Approved:

Dr. Sue C. Jacobs

Thesis Adviser

Dr. Kay Bull

Dr. Steve Edwards

Dr. A. Gordon Emslie

Dean of the Graduate College

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The desire to complete this thesis began years before my graduate education. In looking back on the path my life has taken, I am grateful for the support and influence of many people along the way. I thank my parents, Larry and Beth Page, for continuing to show their support even when it seemed that I completely changed my career plans. I am grateful to Director Nelson of the Council of Law Enforcement Education and Training for her agency's assistance in completing this project. Additionally, this thesis was only possible thanks to many unnamed officers who were kind enough to participate.

I thank Sue C. Jacobs, my thesis chair and advisor, for her endless assistance and welcoming glow when I would drop by her office unannounced. I thank Kay Bull for his helpful input in compiling this project. Lastly, I owe thanks to Steve Edwards for scaring me early on, which gave the drive to complete a thesis not to be "bound on both ends." If you can read this, I passed!

Finally, I am eternally in debt to Larry Bohm, a friend of the family, who funded my undergraduate education. By allowing me to reach higher education, he started the process of events, which led me to where I am today. Hearing stories of Lorenzo Bohm, my great grandfather, as a police officer for a small town in New Jersey, sparked my never-ending interest in law enforcement. In doing this study, I hope the overlooked rural officer and my great grandfather will never be forgotten.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

I. INTRODUCTION 1

Statement of the Problem 2
Purpose of the Study 3
Significance of the Study 3
Delimitations 3
Limitations 3
Assumptions 4
Definition of Terms 4

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE 6

An Understanding of Stress 6
An Introduction to Police Stress 9
Models and Sources of Police Stress 12
Gender Considerations 14
Police Coping with Stress 16
Vicarious Police Stress 19
Current Interventions for Police Stress 25
Current Interventions for Families 25
Current Interventions for Officers 28
The Rural Aspect of Policing 29
Rural Crime 31
Rural Police Stress 32
Rural Mental Health 35

III. METHODOLOGY 38

Statement of the Problem 38
Procedures 38
Participants 40
Instruments 40
Hypotheses 45
Exploring Coping Mechanisms 46

Chapter Page

IV. RESULTS 48

Characteristics of the Sample and Population 48
Data Analysis of Measures 49
Hypotheses 52
Coping Mechanisms...54
Counseling Knowledge Questions 55

V. CONCLUSION 58

Hypotheses 58
Coping Mechanisms Discussion 61
Counseling Resource Knowledge Questions Discussion 65
Implications...69

REFERENCES 73

APPENDIX..81

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

1 Characteristics of the Sample..50
2 Descriptive Statistics for Each Measure 51
3 Descriptive Statistics for COPE Inventory Subscales 51
4 Pearson Product-Moment Correlations among Scales..52
5 Means of Coping Subscales in Descending Order...56
6 Correlations of Coping Subscales with Stress Scales and Life Satisfaction.........56
7 Counseling Resource Knowledge...57
8 Urban Counseling Resource Knowledge Comparison 68

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As the United States invests more energy into security and protection, all levels of law enforcement are affected. After each national crisis, regardless whether natural or man-made, numerous researchers point to the mental health of all of those individuals involved. Police officers, by nature of their job, are some of the first to respond to disasters. It is no surprise that emergency responders become a major focus in the mental health field after such events. However, the law enforcement profession deserves a critical review for the benefit of researchers, practitioners, and those officers.

Policing is the subject of many studies. For example, trauma is a well-researched area in police psychology (for an overview see Territo & Sewell, 1999). Unfortunately, many researchers focus on the extreme aspects of the police profession. On a daily basis, officers confront less traumatic, but almost equally stressful situations. These occurrences are not special occasions, but viewed as an unavoidable part of their job. In actuality, the training of police officers takes place in purposively stressful environments, so that they may function at an optimal level when performing their duties. Despite this training, stress is commonplace and officers must work within these constraints.

Stress originates from numerous points for police officers. The understanding of police stress is much more complex then examining the job as a single aspect. Within the profession, many researchers break down the concept of police stress as originating from

different sources. Many investigators who look at law enforcement stress utilize a survey approach and contact large police departments for participants. A wealth of knowledge on police stress exists today in urban areas. Rural departments are often not sampled or considered, due to their believed similarity to the urban departments (i.e., a cop is a cop, no matter where they are located).

Slowly, attention is turning to urban and rural differences. Rural departments have smaller operating budgets, patrol wider areas with fewer officers, may lack sophisticated technology or specialty units (K9, drug enforcement, special operations, etc) and face unique types of crime. A major example of the differences is the lack of backup. Smaller agencies may be left waiting for some time for another officer to assist on a "call" (a request for police service). Rural environments have their own culture and unique sources of stress for a police officer. Until recently, rural officers were considered to be similar to their urban counterparts. While both geographic locations work to enforce the law, there is enough of a difference to warrant examination of rural police.

Statement of the Problem

Most research on police officer stress, trauma, burnout, and coping has focused on large, metropolitan cities. Popular research topics include trauma and crisis reactions among these emergency personnel. The rural law enforcement agencies are often overlooked for their purposed similarity to urban agencies. There is a lack of empirical research regarding rural police, stressors, and coping techniques. My research focuses on stress and coping so that researchers, practitioners, and officers can obtain a better understanding of the differences between police departments.

Purpose of the Study

My primary purpose in this present study was to examine the relationship among perceived stress, operational police stress, organizational police stress, satisfaction with life, coping strategies, and perceived social support in rural police officers in the State of Oklahoma.

Significance of the Study

This research adds to the knowledge of rural law enforcement stress and coping. The measures allowed for an increased understanding of sources of police stress and coping techniques among rural officers. As officers warm to the idea of counseling as a viable coping and general mental health promotion technique, it becomes important for the mental health professional to have an understanding of the rural police life. Identifying differences in rural and urban officers can allow those mental health professionals to tailor their training and practices to better suit the forgotten and underappreciated rural police officer.

Delimitations

This study had the following delimitations:

1. Participants were municipal, county, tribal, or state law enforcement officers.
2. Participants were all employed in the state of Oklahoma.
3. Participants worked in a rural area of the state.

Limitations

The limitation of this study lies in the self-report nature of the measurements. Additionally, since officers were solicited from continuing education classes, those officers not in attendance were not represented. Finally, urban officers were used in the

creation of the Police Stress Questionnaire - Operational and the Police Stress Questionnaire - Organizational, so the applicability to rural police is undetermined. The authors (McCreary & Thompson, 2006) state that future research with these measures should examine the differences between rural and urban. Although urban officers also completed the measures, I focused on understanding the rural police officer.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made:

1. The officers would be able to determine correctly their classification as a rural or urban officer (participants were provided with a definition of each).
2. The law enforcement officers would respond honestly on all the measures.

Definition of the Terms

<u>Stress</u>- the experience of a perceived or real threat to mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being, resulting from a series of physiological responses and adaptations.

<u>Municipal Officer</u>- any officer employed by a town or city. This excludes county deputies, sheriffs, jailors, the Oklahoma Highway Patrol, or other county or state based agency charged with carrying out law enforcement duties.

<u>County Officer (Deputy)</u>- any officer employed by a county entity in the State of Oklahoma. These officers are commonly referred to as “deputies” or “sheriff’s deputies.”

Tribal Officer- any officer, trained by the Council of Law Enforcement Education and Training (CLEET), working for a tribal jurisdiction as identified by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and State of Oklahoma.

State Officer- any officer employed by the State of Oklahoma. These officers are typically the Oklahoma Highway Patrol and Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation. Park Rangers and Game Wardens fall under this definition.

Rural Officer- any certified municipal officer working for a police agency not located within a metropolitan statistical area (MSA). Furthermore, the agency cannot be self-considered as a suburban town (i.e. just outside of a metropolitan area).

Urban Officer- any certified municipal officer working for a police agency within a statistical metropolitan area (MSA).

Operational Police Stress- stress originating from the performance of police work. Typical sources include shift work, working alone, and paperwork.

Organizational Police Stress- stress originating from the police department policies and procedures. Typical sources include staff shortages, leadership styles, and lack of resources.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research exists in many aspects of policing. In understanding police stress, researchers and practitioners must be knowledgeable in the general concepts and theories of stress before applying them to the law enforcement world. Since many researchers to date used urban police departments, much of the literature I reviewed focuses on larger municipalities. These studies serve to outline the general stressors in policing and to provide a glimpse of the police culture. When necessary, I discuss the applicability to rural officers.

Similar to other professions, officers sometime take their work home after their shift. A single officer can negatively and positively influence spouses, children, friends, and family members. After I review vicarious police, I outline the current interventions. Finally, after gaining an understanding of the police culture, stressors and their sources, I present the rural aspect of policing and mental health concerns.

An Understanding of Stress

What is stress? Certainly, any discussion over police stress and coping must examine the stressful nature of police work. Nearly everyone, at some point in his or her life, has exclaimed, "I'm stressed out!" Stress seems to be well acquainted with the U.S.

way of life, but is by no means limited to the northwestern hemisphere. Although many people can conjure up personal definitions and symptoms of stress, many theorists have explained this inevitable human experience.

Many definitions of stress exist in the literature (Cohen, Kessler, & Gordon, 1997; Folkman, 1997; Schuler, 1980). The focus of stress has changed from a biological perspective to an integrated biological/psychological response. Carlson (2002) conceptualizes stress as a "physiological reaction caused by the perception of aversive or threatening situations" (p. 486); while Richard Lazarus defines it as a "state of anxiety produced when events and responsibilities exceed one's coping abilities" (Seaward, 2004, p. 4). Whether from a behavioral-response or a psychological view, the constant remains that stress is felt by everyone. Although an individual's response is truly unique, the far-reaching fingers of stress touch the body and the mind. Developmentally, stress is not limited to the teenage years, as many adolescents may believe. Each stage in life brings unique tasks and challenges.

Early views of stress explained the environment's effect on the body and subsequently the psychological realm (Resick, 2001). As biological beings, researchers examine our bodily responses to stressful environments. If these stressors are, or become, severe enough, people begin to deteriorate (Resick, 2001; Selye, 1976; Selye, 1980).

Hans Selye, hailed to be one of the influential fathers of stress research, describes stress as "an abstraction" and argues that stress is felt by everyone to some degree (Selye, 1976). In his later works, Selye concluded that few people define stress the same way (Selye, 1980). Stressors need not be negative in order to physically and emotionally

affect an individual. Certainly, a long awaited promotion, seen here as a positive life change, can be stressful. Selye (1980) identified a distinction between good and bad stress. A vital part of the impact of stress is in how individuals view the event. Does this situation help or hurt them?

Selye's model of the "stress syndrome," also known as the "General Adaptation Syndrome" (G.A.S.) is an explanation of an organism's response to stress (Selye, 1976). Briefly described here, the first stage of the G.A.S. is the "alarm reaction." Here, the organism is taken by surprise. The body responds internally. The second phase is the "stage of resistance." Strengths and energy mobilize to fight off this attack. If the body spends too much time at this stage and depletes its energy, the "stage of exhaustion" eventually surfaces. By now the body is tired, exhausted, and used whatever resources available to respond to the stressor.

Stress invades our daily lives. Stressors, or sources of stress, are innumerable. They can be found hidden in dark corners waiting to jump out. These stressors are also unique to the individual. Stressors originate in the home environment, the work place, interpersonal relationships, one's daily environment, the community, and because of a disaster, to mention briefly only a few sources. Surely, there are more stress causing situations out there, but just as distinctive as the sources are the responses to these stressors.

For example, two parents may experience different health and psychological reactions to the same demand. One parent may handle screaming children better than another in the same situation. This understanding is crucial to interpreting an individual's response. An officer may be involved in a shooting and not be affected as much as a

partner in the same shooting. Reactions to stress differ based on various characteristics of the individual, event, and environment.

I conducted a search for the term stress using PsycINFO. The following categories were returned: financial, occupational, physiological, psychological, social, chronic, and environmental. Stress attacks from many fronts and sticks a hand in peoples' daily lives. Stress affects many areas of life. Officers, regardless of location, experience each of these "types" of stress.

An Introduction to Police Stress

While police work is essentially the same regardless of the town's location, upon closer examination, there are unique differences. I review below common police stressors including both stress at home and on the job. I further look at coping mechanisms, or ways in which people handle their stress, due to the potential to mediate the effects of stress. Finally, I discuss specific roadblocks to a mentally healthy rural police officer, namely the lack of funding and police/rural culture.

Many researchers have identified stressors in the everyday lives of individuals. There is no shortage of research regarding coping mechanisms and responses to stress (Frydenberg, 2002; Snyder, 1999). Researchers of these topics examined our law enforcement officers (Territo & Sewell, 1999). The health of law enforcement men and women are impacted by the occupation. Stressful occupations can have serious effects on the person and the organization (Beutler, Nussbaum, & Meredith, 1988; Blau, 1994; Brough, 2004; Hancock & Desmond, 2001; Kureczka, 1999).

To demonstrate the potential personal and organizational risks of the stressful police occupation, I shall examine a few studies. Beutler, Nussbaum, and Meredith

(1988) examined changes in the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) among a small sample of urban police officers. Twenty-five police officers were evaluated upon recruitment, 2 years later, and a follow-up 4 years from time of recruitment. Beutler, Nussbaum, and Meredith (1988) state, "differences in MMPI performance between intake and Year 2 of active service ($N = 25$) revealed significant changes on one scale" (p. 505). This scale was the MacAndrews Alcoholism Scale (MAC). Scores for the MAC increased significantly, $F(1, 24) = 20.93$, $p < .015$ (Beutler et al., 1988).

When the remaining officers were revisited after 4 years of employment, three scales of the MMPI showed significant increases (Hypochondriasis, Hysteria, and MacAndrews Alcoholism Scale). The authors explain the changes were greater than expected (Beutler et al., 1988). These findings suggest that the occupation can impact officers and perhaps their levels of stress and ways of coping.

Beutler, Nussbaum, and Meredith (1988) documented changes in MMPI scores of police officers over time. Specifically, significant increases in the MacAndrews Alcoholism Scale posed a risk for the police officer, as well as the police organization. Beutler, Nussbaum, and Meredith (1988) view such changes as indications of behaviors that may be harmful to police officers and their employing agencies. Excessive use of alcohol by officers may begin to interfere with their performance. However, a noted limitation to these findings is a small sample size.

Trauma and crises are well-researched areas of policing (for an overview see Territo & Sewell, 1999). The occupation of policing may be detrimental to the health of the officer. Studies have linked Posttraumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD) symptoms to

physical health (Violanti, Andrew, Burchfiel, Dom, Hartley & Miller, 2006), occupation and physical health (Quire & Blount, 1999), and occupation and psychological health (Brough, 2004). Police trauma is beyond the scope of my literature review, but remains a vital field in police studies.

Another well-supported area of police research is burnout (Bakker & Heuven, 2006; Martinussen, Richardsen, & Burke, 2007; Brough, 2004). Bakker and Heuven (2006) describe a theoretical model for burnout among police officers and nurses (human service workers). They examined whether emotional job demands relate to burnout. Bakker and Heuven (2006) hypothesized that these emotional demands would lead to emotional dissonance, which would influence burnout and in turn manifest in performance of duties. Structural equation modeling analyses demonstrated that emotional demands relate to burnout "mainly through emotional dissonance," thus supporting their burnout theory (Bakker & Heuven, 2006, p. 434). Furthermore, they explain that battling emotional demands, that is concealing some emotions while showing others, may in turn reduce their energy levels. This serves as an important characteristic of police work, namely the need to hide true emotions in the course of their duties. Burnout among officers, if not adequately addressed, has been shown to be predictive of psychosomatic complaints, satisfaction with life, job satisfaction, intention to quit, and commitment to the department (Martinussen et al., 2007).

Stressors assault police officers from all sides. Indeed, many researchers claim that the police profession is one of the most stressful occupations in which one can participate (Kroes, 1976; Thompson, Kirk-Brown, & Brown, 2001; Toch, 2002; Violanti & Aron, 1995). The family, job, and department provide many opportunities to place

pressure on the officer (Bakker & Heuven, 2006; Blau, 1994; Violanti & Aron, 1995). Problems originating in the family realm can creep their way into the work environment and vice versa. Stress from actual police work can range from long periods of boredom to witnessing the death of a partner (Kroes, 1976). A frequently reported stressor for police officers is the shift work involved with keeping a town safe at all hours of the day (McCreary & Thompson, 2006). Also, the police department, with its bureaucratic confusion and steadfast regulations, found especially in larger agencies, has unique sources of stressors such as unfair advancement opportunities and lack of supervisor and departmental support (Violanti & Aron, 1995). Rural agencies are not immune to such departmental stressors, but it is unclear if they experience less stress due to their smaller size.

Models and Sources of Police Stress

Different models of police stress exist in the literature. Early conceptualizations of police stress saw the profession as the source of stress (Malloy & Mays, 1999). Contemporary researchers offer conceptualizations that further break down this simplistic notion into internal versus external stressors (Blau, 1994). Internal stressors refer to aspects of the occupation that cause stress for the officers. Such internal stressors are shift work and paperwork. External stressors are issues or situations causing stress for the officer, but remain outside the police organization. When examining police stress, researchers may examine the officer themselves and their sources of stress, whether from the department or home, or purely examine sources of stress from within the department. For example, different sources of stressors can best conceptualize the area of police stress.

McCreary and Thompson (2006) developed the Operational and Organizational Police Stress Questionnaires. Operational police stress involves the public's image of police work. Examples of such operational stressors include working on a shift schedule, completing paperwork, working overtime, experiencing traumatic events, and eating healthy (not too many places stay open 24 hours a day for an officer to receive a good meal). McCreary and Thompson (2006) argue that organizational police stress is another distinctive form of stress experienced by officers. Organizational stress refers to the rules and administrative practices of the police department, including the supervisors. Examples of organizational stressors in police work include constant changes in policy, lack of resources, inadequate equipment, staff shortages, and internal investigations. McCreary and Thompson developed stress scales to assess these particular aspects of police stress.

Violanti and Aron (1995) conceptualize police stress as a composite of the following sources: (1) organizational, (2) the criminal justice system, (3) the public, and (4) police work. Organizational and police work most closely resemble the McCreary and Thompson (2006) conceptualization. The criminal justice system provides unique stressors for officers. Police officers risk their lives to capture those individuals who chose not to comply with the laws of society. Officers believe the criminal justice system is too soft on criminals that they worked so hard to capture (Crank, 2004). Officers may repeatedly lock up a certain "habitual offender" only to find them back on the street hours later. Lastly, Violanti and Aron (1995) identify the public as a source of stress.

Often are there reports in the newspaper or television of an officer acting out of their prescribed duties, whether it is assault or theft. The public is often bombarded by

media commentaries on abuse of power issues with police officers, but seldom presented with the positive aspects of police work. Such media attention influences the officer's work environment. In a 1991 survey released in 1994, it was reported that 61% of people in rural areas respected their local police versus 54% in urban settings (Weisheit, Falcone, & Wells, 1994).

Gender and Police Considerations

Gender also plays into the conceptualization of police stress. Thompson, Kirk-Brown, and Brown (2001) investigated female police officers. They identify the following theoretical stressors for female officers: (1) operational, namely the tasks and duties performed by the officers, (2) relationship and culture, referring to the organizational and interpersonal context, and (3) the management of the department, often found within the practices, policies and workload.

Bartol, Bergen, Volckens, and Knoras (1992) looked at rural gender differences in police stress. Among rural female officers ($N = 30$), external stressors were seen as the greatest source of stress (Bartol et al., 1992). Both male and female officers in rural Vermont report most stressors in their line of work to be equally stressful, however an exception is task-related stress (performing job functions). Bartol et al. (1992) state females experience more stress in this area than their male counterparts. They believe this may be due to the more sensitive and empathetic nature of women in police work. Additionally, the investigators reported only 60% of female officers "felt they had the same opportunities for advancement" (p. 257). In another study, Morash, Haarr, and Kwak (2006) found that "token status as a female has a significant effect on stress" (p. 36).

He, Zhao, and Ren (2005) assessed race and gender differences in police stress. In the study of a large, urban police department, they primarily examined four subgroups: (1) White males, (2) African-American males, (3) White Females, and (4) African-American females. Their sample size was 1,100 with only 14% of the sample female. The smallest group ($N = 51$) was White female. He et al. (2005) concluded "female officers had higher levels of stress than male officers" and White male officers reported higher stress than their African-American male counterparts (p. 542). Interestingly, within the female category, African-American females did not report higher levels of stress than White female officers.

In a similar study of minority female police officers in Texas, the investigators reported, "Black and White officers are more likely to report that their job was stressful" (Carmen et al., 2007, p. 290) in comparison to Latina, Asian, and American Indian police officers. Furthermore, the minority groups believe they are accepted and treated fairly; leading the researchers to pose police stress was more a result of the job than their gender (Carmen et al., 2007).

Stressors, those agents producing physical and mental changes in our bodies, attack officers from multiple sources. Outside, or external, stressors are often seen as stressors, which lay outside of the profession (i.e., family conflict, children), and may have an impact on officer performance while on duty. Internal stressors, whether conceptualized as originating from the tasks and duties of officers or from a managerial level, have shown to affect the lives of officers while off the job (Kannady, 1999; Patterson, 2003; Southworth, 1999).

Police Coping with Stress

Officers juggle the onslaught of stress with a variety of coping mechanisms. One of the most frequently reported methods of handling work stress is through peer interaction (Kroes, 1976; Reiser & Geiger, 1984). In times of hardship, officers reported turning to other officers for support (Gentz, 1999). Studies of larger urban departments show a preference for a fellow officer as opposed to a psychologist who "doesn't understand the profession" (Janik, 1999). Larger departments have the funding to provide psychological help in a multitude of ways.

One such psychological service available to law enforcement is a psychologist, who can be contracted or staffed (Blau, 1994). However, researchers determined, in a study of large departments serving a community of 100,000 or greater, only 52% reported using a professional to help their officers with psychological concerns (Delprino & Bahn, 1999). Other frequently used methods include peers with special counseling training or Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs; Scott, 2004). Of course, these services come at a price. In most of the studies regarding police stress and coping, researchers used large, urban police departments. For the rural town, whose operating budget is severely limited (Weisheit et al., 1994), luxuries such as an on-call psychologist or therapist and organized peer support groups are mostly out of the question. Smaller towns, however, are not immune to stressful and traumatic events

Further complicating the counseling-officer dynamic is a mistrust of outsiders (Janik, 1999). The police culture is a tight knit community only accessible to few nonmembers (Crank, 2004). Masculinity shows itself strong in this occupation in that any sign of weakness, such as seeking emotional support, is believed to jeopardize their

future on the police force (Crank, 2004; Reiser & Geiger, 1984). Showing emotions is perceived as being mentally weak for the profession, which in turn forces officers to strictly manage their emotions in unhealthy ways (Toch, 2002). This restriction of feelings poses possible health risks (Bakker & Heuven, 2006).

In police departments, whose numbers reach anything above a few hundred, an individual officer has many possibilities for forming friendships and close personal bonds. Additionally, an officer can turn to these peers in a time of need. In smaller departments of only five to ten, for example, the opportunity to find those peers may not be the same as their urban counterparts. On the other hand, officers in smaller towns do enjoy the reality of knowing all the officers in the department. However, due to financial constraints and understaffing, backup and assistance on a call can be hours away or just never come (Weisheit et al., 1994).

In the literature on law enforcement coping, officers report a desire to talk to other officers (Gentz, 1999; Patterson, 2003), but because of the department size, the opportunity may not present itself readily in smaller agencies. Stress taken to the extreme can manifest as trauma. Critical incidents, such as deaths, shootings, and serious injury are unavoidable in the police profession. Gentz (1999) surveyed a sample of 211 urban officers about whom they talked to after a critical incident. Gentz (1999) reported that the majority of officers (63%) spoke with a fellow officer, while a much smaller amount (9%) spoke with a psychologist or psychiatrist.

Another common concern among officers is the increased visibility. Rural officers also report trouble finding "peace" in their town because of a "24 hour" officer curse (Toch, 2002). Since the officer is a prominent, recognizable figure in the

community, citizens contact him or her for help despite being at home and not currently "on the clock". Such frequent interruptions during one's personal time produce unique stressors for which the officer must cope.

In a sample of 758 officers, Alexander and Walker (1994) identified the off duty coping strategies for dealing with work-induced stress. Alexander and Walker (1994) concluded talking things over with coworkers was the most frequent coping strategy reported while on duty, whereas keeping things to oneself was more frequently used while off-duty. Other frequently used coping strategies were taking work home/thinking about work and an increase in smoking. Alexander and Walker's (1994) study is unique in that it assessed not only the occurrence of coping mechanisms, but also the perceived effectiveness. Despite frequent use of many techniques, 65% of the officers felt that the techniques used while off duty were either "only slightly or not at all effective" (p. 135).

Mental health is becoming a growing concern to our nation. Recently, a 2003 government report identified rural areas as in need of improvement in their mental health care (New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2003). Mental health centers, places where officers theoretically could obtain care, receive little funding and for the mental health professional can be undesirable places to work (Hargrove & Breazeale, 1993). Similar to the police profession, rural areas contain a culture of mistrust of outsiders, lack of mental health knowledge, and a preference to handle their own problems (Human & Wasem, 1991). Rural officers frequently come from the towns they serve (Weisheit, Wells, & Falcone, 1995). Special consideration for care of rural officers is needed. Fortunately, there is promise for the officer and mental health professional alike. Scott

(2004) reported that officers would “likely respond” to peer support and mental health care (p. 257).

Vicarious Police Stress

Policing as a profession is tough. There are physical, emotional, and psychological tolls that even the hardened veteran must face. Oftentimes, this personal struggle does not stop at the front door. Families, too, become involved in the stressful work of police officers. The focus now shifts to the family environment, as this is a rapidly growing area of interest for researchers of police stress. An understanding of the influences of police stress on the family is vital for the mental health practitioner and aspiring police researchers.

The law enforcement profession influences an officer’s psychological well-being. These events, due to their significance, may also affect the family members and friends of the police officer (Patterson, 2003). The profession’s impact on the family can range from mild to severe, ending in divorce. The difference between many families is a result of many factors, which I discuss below. This information is important for mental health professionals and researchers who work with police officers. A counselor must be cautious and cannot over generalize to every police family or partnership he or she may encounter.

To be successful in treating police families, a counselor needs to have some knowledge of the police profession and the unique family dynamics. Putting forth the effort to learn these aspects will greatly pay off down the road. Mostly, a therapist should have a good idea of the demands and conflicts that arise with police families if he or she intends to do a lot of work with this special population.

When looking at the impact of the profession on the family, the term vicarious victimization often appears. The officers can easily tell you about the sources of stress and pressure that originate in the workplace. Some stressors for police officers with which to be familiar are shift work, paperwork, a perceived unfair criminal justice system (i.e. too lenient on criminals), and lack of proper resources, to name a few (Bakker & Heuven, 2006; Blau, 1994; Crank, 2004). These forces acting on the officer often accompany the officer home and as a result, the family relationships suffer (Finn & Tomz, 1999).

Spouses will report a change in their partners because of being a police officer. After a few years on the job (and many times reinforced in training), an officer's worldview becomes negative (Kannady, 1999). Some officers develop a never-ending suspicion of others, a tendency to act like a detective even after hours, and maintain a strict rule of emotional distance (Crank, 2004; Kannady, 1999; Southworth, 1999). These are some roadblocks a therapist will encounter if an officer and his or her spouse seek out counseling. These characteristics are highly influenced by the training the officer received and the nature of the work that requires such a protective disposition.

The masculine culture of police work will often be a barrier in counseling. Many times a spouse may seek counseling, when the officer deems nothing is wrong. This emotional distance that is necessarily for survival "on the streets" leaves the officer in a tough position. Just like the spouse and counselor, the officer experiences a wide range of emotions and reactions, but hiding these is a requirement of the job. This "emotional hardening" needed for work is a hindrance to an intimate relationship (Kannady, 1999). One can begin to imagine the impacts the profession has on the functioning of a family.

Southworth (1999) states that traits and dispositions necessary for successful police work can also be less than desirable as characteristics of spouses, parents, and friends. These police "dispositions" are worth knowing, because a counselor can assist an officer and his or her family in identifying negative patterns in the home life. Recognizing that patterns more suitable for professional life are being used in one's personal realm will assist in the recovery of equilibrium in family dynamics.

Southworth (1999) identifies four such dispositions that officers may unnecessarily exhibit while off duty. First, the constant pursuit of expecting respect for authority is called "to be professional." This may not sound as bad, but when an officer arrives home and still demands the respect for his authority, it creates an unsteady family atmosphere. Secondly, the disposition "to take control" is an officer's attempt to "be in control, no matter what situation" (Southworth, 1999). Officers may attempt to control, with an authoritative stance, every minor situation that occurs at home. Next, "to remain detached" is where many spouses feel the strain in their relationships. Here, the officer learned to be emotionally detached from all situations in order to maintain a hardened stance. When officers do not turn this off at home, it isolates the family and children from a caring mother, father, spouse or partner. Lastly, "to question everything" is a disposition to remain constantly alert and suspicious of all family members or partners. It is difficult to feel emotionally attached to someone who is constantly suspicious and questioning your every move.

As the police officer and family members enter a counseling service, a therapist needs to be aware of the aforementioned dispositions commonly found in dysfunctional police families. Sometimes just getting the family to spot these in their own family

interactions can cause the officer to reduce such destructive behaviors (Southworth, 1999). Southworth's (1999) dispositions offer understanding to common police family struggles.

With the stressors assaulting police officers and their families/partners, police families may elect to end in divorce. Many researchers briefly mention that officers have a higher divorce rate than the rest of the U.S. (Lord, Gray, & Pond, 1991; Maslach & Jackson, 1999; Reiser & Geiger, 1984), but Blau (1994) disagrees, believing it is a myth. Borum and Philpot (1993) state that empirical evidence lacks in showing police officers have a higher divorce rate. Perhaps this lack of support is a result of a strong force for the family to be perfect in the community (i.e. show no signs of marital discourse or dysfunction; Scott, 2004). With a culture of self-protection, officers protect each other from "outsiders" (Borum & Philpot, 1993). Abused spouses face an additional struggle. If the spouse calls the police to report abuse or violence, it is a good chance that the officers responding will be friends or know the abusing officer (Borum & Philpot, 1993). Imagine the internal pressure the spouse feels if he or she lives in a rural town where departments have about five officers!

Domestic violence within a police family is at the extreme end of effects of job stress. Researchers have set out to determine the amount of violence that takes place in a police partnership. Exact numbers can be difficult to tabulate due to response bias (i.e. not many people are going to admit to abusing their spouse). Furthermore, the secrecy and brotherly protection may lead to fewer reported cases. This topic warrants a note of caution. Spousal abuse is an extreme form of the expression of job stress. These

statements are not intended to reflect an overarching epidemic in the police profession, but rather a small subsection of officers.

In a study on after-effects of job-related stress, Jackson and Maslach (1982) examined husband and wives (*N* = 142) ratings of burnout, sense of personal accomplishment, and coping behaviors in law enforcement couples. All the husbands in the sample were police officers, with a majority currently married (97%). Using survey research, Jackson and Maslach (1982) conclude wives more frequently deal with their stress by talking to friends and by participating in groups. Perhaps most important for counselors to be aware of is the finding that the couples reported seeking professional help was an uncommon coping behavior. Couples with martial discourse reported having fewer friends and dissatisfaction with a partner in the police profession (Jackson & Maslach, 1982).

Furthermore, Jackson and Maslach (1982) reported that police officers, as a way of coping, often find ways to escape. Such behavior can often leave the spouse feeling further isolated from the officer. Eradicating the sources of job stress for police officers will not happen; that is simply the nature of the work. Spouses and officers need to be cautious and alert for signs that these job-related troubles are seeping into the domestic domain. Because the sample source for this aforementioned study only included male police officers, future research should consider these coping behaviors and violence trends among minority and female officers.

Johnson, Todd, and Subramanian (2005) studied violence in police families using a path model of analysis to examine a relationship between violence exposure (as part of the job) and domestic violence. They identified the mediation factors of burnout,

authoritarian spillover (into home life), alcohol use, and department withdrawal. With a sample of 413 officers, Johnson et al. (2005) suggested that an officer's exposure to violence and related domestic violence in the home is a mediated process. Although exposure to violence in policing is unavoidable, it matters most if it leads to spousal violence. Levels of burnout and "authoritarian spillover" (i.e. remaining in the police mindset even when off duty) showed a significant link to spousal abuse (Johnson et al., 2005, p. 9).

Johnson et al. (2005) view exposure to violence as a potential direct and indirect cause of spousal violence. They did not specify the meaning of "violence" to respondents. This is crucial because more than 40% of their respondents reported getting out of control and behaving violently towards their spouse. The exact type of violence was not examined, nor was the definition of "gotten out of control." In addition, path model analysis does not show causation, only relationships.

While many researchers examine the impact of the profession on the family, it is usually focused on the spouse or partner. Seldom do researchers investigate the impact on the children in police families. Children often feel the pressure when one or both parents are involved in law enforcement.

Miller (2007) identifies two specific types of stress for the child of a law enforcement officer. First, the strong identification with police profession on the officer's part requires a heavy investment of time (Miller, 2007). New officers are often eager to prove themselves worthy to their department and fellow colleagues by spending extra time on the job or working special assignments. Further complicating time constraints, officers, especially in rural areas, may be forced to work a second job to pull

in extra income to support the family (Kannady, 1999). This only adds to the stress. Furthermore, there are times when the child wants a father and not a police officer.

Miller (2007) calls the second impact of the job on children "cop kid". The child experiences harassment by peers for the professional choices of their parents. They are tormented, often because there is a lack of true understanding in what the job entails (Miller, 2007). In addition, the child may be chided by the negative media portrayals of police work (Miller, 2007). The pressure to be perfect because one's parent is in law enforcement can also cause a child to rebel.

I presented above sources of stress specific to the officer. It is clear the police officer and family often struggle with the shift work, constant fear of danger, time commitment and other organizational pressures. Unfortunately, these job-related stressors often enter the family and home domain. The extreme forms are partner violence. Children are not immune to their own unique sources of stress from being in a law enforcement family. As therapists, we must be able to recognize these dynamics in the family environment. The fact that at least one spouse is an officer may be one of the causes of family dysfunction.

Current Interventions for Police Stress

Current Interventions for Police Families

The ideal intervention is to have both partners in counseling. However, the spouse or child may present first. Some police departments "train" the spouse as the officers endure their training, as well as preventative counseling and psychoeducation (Watson, 1999). Normalizing the impact of the job on the family and offering coping

resources as well as information about help in the area can provide a relief to both partners (Kannady, 1999).

Kannady (1999) approaches police family stress through a cognitive model. Kannady (1999) emphasizes a need for families to view the stress as a challenge, as opposed to a threat. Additionally, stress is further reduced if the couple has adequate resources to meet the demands. The challenge for the counselor is to examine their coping resources and outlook on the problem. The family stress can be related to positive (promotion, new child, etc.) or negative events (accident, no pay raise, etc).

Framing situations into police relevant wording and metaphors can provide results. For instance, an officer wears a bulletproof vest. This protects the officer from the onslaught of bullet and knife attacks. In a sense, the occupation also requires officers to wear an "emotion-proof vest." If the officer has trouble being emotionally expressive at home, one possible approach is to discuss how the officer is wearing his "emotion proof" vest at home, where it is not necessary.

Borum and Philpot (1993) explain that counselors need to allow the couple to express their previous attempts to handle their conflict. In doing so, the counselor, along with the family, determines where the friction is taking place and can decide on the best approach to therapy. Borum and Philpot (1993) identify four main goals and provide intervention guides. These four goal areas are (1) Structural goals, (2) Attitudinal/Affective/Cognitive goals, (3) Social-Interpersonal goals, and (4) Job-related goals. Their article warrants a more in-depth look, because of the useful strategies the authors provide to assist counselors working with police families.

The task to be completed with structural goals is to strengthen the relationship between the couple, by clearly defining the boundaries of the relationship to the police department (Borum & Philpot, 1993). Boundary issues with the police department interfere with the relationship of the couple. Among the list of strategies is allotting a time when neither partner can discuss job-related issues. The intent here is to increase the couple's time together without the departmental issues creeping into his or her "off duty" time.

Attitudinal/affective/cognitive goals center on increasing intimacy, positive feelings in the marriage, and assisting the couple to see the larger influence that the police department has on each of them and their relationship (Borum & Philpot, 1993). Strategies include reframing, creating a "decompression" time after work, and using identified strengths (Borum & Philpot, 1993). Social-interpersonal goals are intended to "teach the couple basic communication skills" (Borum & Philpot, 1993). Two popular strategies involve teaching active listening and listening without decision making. Problem-solving training can also be effective (Borum & Philpot, 1993). Finally, job-related goals are created in order to establish more time for the couple to spend together. Improving communication is beneficial, in that each person feels there is an open environment to discuss issues related to the job (Borum & Philpot, 1993). Interventions include basic listening skills and time management.

These interventions are a great starting point for any therapist working with police families. Borum and Philpot (1993) warn that therapists must work to establish working relationships with each member, without isolating anyone. The officer cannot feel that the therapist is siding with the spouse or vice versa. With the sensitivity to mental health

that officers have in general, these tools can help the family without leaving a "bad taste" of therapy in the family's mouth.

In light of these current interventions, Delprino and Bahn (1999), in a nation wide study, determined that only 41% of surveyed police departments (*N* = 223) offered counseling to the spouse or family of a police officer. It is important to note that the study consisted of large municipal departments, whereas rural towns often do not have the funds to offer such a level of care (Weisheit et al., 1994). Stigma aside, family members who cannot find healthy coping strategies for handling the stress brought on by the partners occupation will need assistance. If the department does not directly provide therapy, the spouse may be the one presenting in your office.

Current Interventions for Officers

Interventions solely for the officer take many forms. These approaches to ensuring proper mental and often physical health are within and outside the police agency. Larger departments, with their higher operating budgets, are able to afford staff psychologists or other mental health workers. Within the department, preparations are made throughout the officer-training period and after they begin their work. Smaller agencies, who cannot afford their own psychologist, still receive some benefit.

Within the State of Oklahoma, the Council for Law Enforcement Training and Education (CLEET) is responsible for the training of all sworn officers in the state. Outside of the initial training period, they are required to attend continuing education courses each year, similar to other professionals. Reviewing the 2006 course catalogue, the following classes touch on the topic of stress within the police profession: critical incident debriefing, financial planning for retirement, mental health crisis intervention,

workplace violence, and stress management (www.cleet.state.ok.us). The preparation that goes into tailoring an officer for duty is too expensive to have it lost on job stress. New recruits and seasoned veterans have the opportunity to review and practice stress management techniques to offset the negative influences of the job.

Another aspect of stress for the rural agency becomes apparent. These CLEET training courses take place throughout the state so that they are accessible to rural, outlying departments. Although this is a great advantage to many, a town with few officers sacrifices manpower so that he or she may attend these courses.

Finally, officers are free to obtain services from private practitioners or community mental health facilities. While the opportunity may be there, a number of factors influence the officer's chance of going. Two are that rural mental health services are sparsely available in rural areas (Human & Wasem, 1991) and that police culture looks unfavorably upon mental health services (Crank, 2004).

The Rural Aspect of Policing

The police officer may appear in a number of different uniforms, tactics, patrol cars and the like, but the sworn duties are the same regardless of location. Officers can expect to make arrests and chase down evaders of the law, but the type and amount of training vary from department to department outside of the state mandated areas of study. Other differences in police departments can be attributed to education, training, recruiting, and resources.

The required education prior to employment of police officers is a debatable topic. It was not too long ago that officers only needed a high school education in order to protect and serve their communities. A great push came about in the 1970's after The

National Advisory Commission of Criminal Justice Standards and Goals recommended, among many things, that departments immediately require new recruits to have a high school education and at least 1 year of college education (Jacob, 1974; Palmiotto, 1997). By 1982, giving time for departments to adjust to these recommendations, the commission recommended that all police departments require their new recruits to have four years of college education (Palmiotto, 1997).

At the time of this study in Oklahoma (2007-2008), only one department in the state required their new recruits to have at least a baccalaureate degree. Only 1,900 out of 12,666 local police agencies, 15%, in the country required some form of college education as of 2000 (Hickman & Reaves, 2003). Palmiotto (1997) reported similar findings. Of the agencies with a population of 2,500 or less, 86% required only a high school diploma (Hickman & Reaves, 2003).

The department size also influences other factors of obtaining officers and funding. The difference between rural and urban is apparent in the hiring process, not just required education. Due to the lesser appeal of smaller, lower paying rural departments, the selection process cannot be too stringent. In jurisdiction populations of less than 2,500, only 24% of these rural agencies used a physical agility test, 21% a written aptitude test, and 20% a personality inventory to screen for new officers (Hickman & Reaves, 2003). The use of psychological measures in the selection of officers in departments in the U.S. overall has made a stark increase over the past 20 years, with figures suggesting up to 90% (Cochrane, Tett & VandeCreek, 2003).

Agencies serving a population of less than 2,500 had an average-operating budget of less than $200,000 per year, where as in the largest cities, in start contrast, had an

average operating budget of $552,500,000 (Hickman & Reaves, 2003)! There are also such variations in the education, training, and budgets of larger rural and urban sized police agencies.

Although I have reviewed stress and coping as it relates to police work, many of the studies I cited are from larger, urban police departments. Even though an argument may be made that police work is the same regardless of location, there are differences. Outside of the obvious geographic differences inherent in rural police work, there are the lifestyle, the community, and crimes unique to only the rural culture.

While it may be true that handling a domestic violence call or traffic accident scene is almost identical among rural departments and their urban counterparts, Weisheit et al. (1994) argues rural environments are distinct from urban environments. This distinction is large enough in some aspects that they affect policing. Differences in rural policing are shaped by the rural culture and way of life, as well as crimes unique to the rural environment (Weisheit et al., 1994).

Rural Crime

Rural crime is often different from urban crime. Using observational methods, Christensen and Crank (2001) analyzed police culture in rural settings. They collected information from police ride-alongs and interviews with sheriff deputies. In identifying "themes," Christensen and Crank (2001) detail several crime-related areas such as driving under the influence, juvenile complaints, nuisance problems, and burglaries. Although Christensen and Crank (2001) outline the rural uniqueness of these occurrences, these violations occur in any police agency across the nation.

In one of the earlier views of rural crime and policing, Weisheit et al. (1994) identify emerging concerns for rural police. Among these growing areas of concern are gangs, organized crime, hate crimes, arson, and biker gangs. They are unique in that such often urban-identified criminal activities are branching their way out into the quiet, isolated areas of the counties. Characteristic of rural policing are the distinctive issues of agricultural and wildlife crime. Officers can expect to be called to handle such disturbances of poaching, crop and equipment theft (Weisheit et al., 1994).

Rural Police Stress

Many factors hamper the practice of rural policing. Often believed to major sources of stress for these officers, the argument for rural police as distinctive from urban begins to emerge when examining these differences. Some of the most identified problem areas are lack of funds, little training, old equipment, lack of proper resources, outdated technology (mostly reflected in radio communications), and fewer colleagues (Christensen & Crank, 2001; Scott, 2004; Weisheit et al., 1994; Weisheit et al., 1995). In addition, because of the general lack of resources found in rural settings, the police and sheriff departments become the catch all for citizen complaints. Weisheit et al. (1994) identifies that “communities want officers to perform a wide range of functions” (p. 9). Whereas capturing an escaped animal falls under the jurisdiction of animal control in an urban setting, the officers in rural areas may need to fill this public service gap and perform the functions of a dogcatcher.

Crank and Caldero (1991) investigated occupational stress in medium-sized police departments. Crank and Caldero (1991) argued, “Much of what is known about stress among police officers is based on research on large metropolitan departments (p.

340). Medium-sized agencies were those employing 40 to 100 sworn police personnel. Their purpose was to examine occupational stress among the smaller departments. Using survey research, Crank and Caldero (1991) focused on the officer's perception of sources of stress.

Officers were instructed to write a statement "about what you think is your greatest source of stress, and why" (Crank & Caldero, 1991, p. 341). The free responses from the officers ($N = 219$) separated into the following content domains: (1) Organization, (2) Task environment, (3) Judiciary, (4) Personal-family, (5) City government, and (6) Other. The greatest source of stress identified by the officers was organization (68.3%). Within the organization content domain, the two most commonly cited specific sources of stress were superiors (42.4%) and working shifts (17%).

Crank and Caldero (1991) further support the notion that organization-related issues (supervisors, shift change, procedures, paperwork, etc.) are influencing our nation's medium-sized police departments. They conclude, "The organization was the overwhelming source of stress among police officers" (p. 347). Furthermore, the research supported the low concern about danger and fear of injury that is commonly misperceived to be a great source of stress for officers. An interesting aspect of Crank and Caldero's (1991) research is that they set out to expand the abundant urban police findings to smaller departments. They sought empirical evidence for widely held, unsupported beliefs.

Crank and Caldero (1991) suspected a difference in occupational stress due to the smaller size. They pondered whether infrequent crime, fewer officers, and less bureaucracy influenced perceptions of stress. This article demonstrates the importance of

understanding smaller departments, rather than unfairly generalizing the findings of metropolitan agencies. Crank and Caldero (1991) concluded overwhelming support for the presence of organization stress within smaller departments. However, their study investigated departments with 40 to 100 officers, which is arguably still a decent size. Crank and Caldero (1991) included eight departments, only two of which were from rural counties. Can their same argument be applied to smaller police departments (less than 50)? Do differences emerge once a certain level of "rural" is set?

Although, as noted earlier, there are inherent stressors in general police work, they may differ in rural police work. Similar to crime differences, exclusive sources of stress exist among the smaller police departments. It is beneficial to revisit the definitions of police officer. While I only focused on rural officers for this study, the terms officer and deputy carry different meaning. A rural police officer and a rural county deputy (also known as sheriff deputy or simply deputy) both are charged with enforcing the laws and ordinances of their respective locations. A rural police officer will serve and enforce within a town limited by city boundaries, whereas a deputy patrols a county, limited by county lines. Some towns are too small to support their own police agency, so they may devise a special contract or agreement with the county sheriff office for patrol services. Both locations are rural, but the county deputy is usually patrolling and responsible for a larger geographical area. This could mean longer police response time, longer time to receive police backup, and greater isolation.

Rural departments differ from metropolitan agencies in number of officers. With so many officers, it is not uncommon to an officer not to know all of his colleagues when working for a larger department. Rural agencies do not experience this loss of personal

connectedness. Scott (2004) points to a discrepancy in amount of contact with supervisors and administrators among urban and rural departments. Officers in larger departments may rarely encounter the higher ranking officers. In contrast, rural officers have constant contact and may know their superiors on a more personal level (Scott, 2004). A large department offers many opportunities for making connections outside the basic "protect your own" feeling found in police culture. Nevertheless, more research must focus on the area of social support among rural officers. With so few, whom do they rely on for support, if anyone?

As noted earlier, there is a public service gap. Such gaps are equally apparent with mental health services and are twofold. First, mental health services are scarce (Human & Wasem, 1991), so rural officers may be the only ones to call in a time of emergency (Hails & Borum, 2003). Secondly, since officers are not immune to the stressors and difficulties of life, whom does the officer turn to in their time of need?

Rural Mental Health

Rural officers often come from their rural communities (Weisheit et al., 1995). Rural towns have their own mental health concerns that bear noting. For instance, health disparities in the rural populations have been identified (Hartley, 2004). Murray and Keller (1991) note rural people comprise about a quarter of the U.S. population. The mental health needs of this large portion of the population have been neglected. Even though I aim in this study to investigate rural officers, much diversity exists among those men and women, as well as rural culture. In this section, I briefly introduce rural mental health, but certainly not exhaustively.

Several factors hinder the delivery of mental health care to rural populations. The availability of services is scare. Maintenance of mental health facilities or private practices requires the availability of trained personnel. Human and Wasem (1991) outline how less income from property taxes does not provide the amount of money needed to fund health and mental health services in rural areas. Theoretically, if a rurally located officer needed to receive mental health care, the lack of availability, among many other factors, may deter him or her from receiving services.

In the mind of the practitioner, the rural environments do not always prove to be the ideal place for work (Human & Wasem, 1991). In addition to making services available, they need to be accessible (Murray & Keller, 1991). Long distances and the ever-increasing gas prices make the accessibility to services a challenge. Public transportation, as found in metropolitan areas, does not exist in the rural areas. Lastly, Human and Wasem (1991) explain how the successful delivery of services depends on the acceptability from the rural populations. Cultures, values, roles, beliefs, and traditions of the rural way of life may conflict with those of urban-based methods of counseling and treatment.

Rural culture draws similar parallels to police culture. Characterization of rural culture includes a tradition of handling one's own problems and a lack of knowledge about mental disorders and services available (Human & Wasem, 1991; Hutner & Windle, 1991). Training for officers includes learning to take care of situations (Crank, 2004). Law enforcement is the "go to" profession for handling what others cannot and do not want. This training instilled in officers from the beginning carries over into their personal lives. As noted previously, the law enforcement profession shies away from

mental health. Police culture views weaknesses as unsuitable for their profession. It takes a special person to fill the role of a police officer. Needed most of all is one who is physically and mentally strong.

Rural culture prefers to handle their own problems, whether it is mental health related or not and because of the barriers noted above, the rural populations do not have easy and reliable access to such services, if needed. Education for the rural population, including rural officers, promises an increase of awareness in services available and a better understanding of emotional health.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Statement of the Problem

The majority of police-related research has been conducted on officer stress, trauma, burnout, and coping among large, metropolitan cities. The rural law enforcement agencies are often overlooked for their purposed similarity to urban agencies. My primary purpose in this study was to examine the relationship among perceived stress, operational police stress, organizational police stress, satisfaction with life, coping strategies, and perceived social support in rural police officers in the State of Oklahoma.

Procedures

A criterion is required to differentiate between rural and urban officers. Creating most of the difficulty in addressing rural police research is the lack of agreement of what exactly constitutes "rural". One can consider population size, department size, area of the town, and location of the town in their criteria for a rurally located police department (Weisheit et al., 1994). Previous research on rural and small town officers used a department size of 60 in the selection process (Scott, 2004).

A national review of rural policing discovered that nearly 91% of all departments employ 50 officers or less (nearly half employ 10 or less) (Weisheit et al., 1994). For the current study, I asked officers to identify their department location and size. In addition, since I aimed at researching rurally located agencies and not towns just outside of

metropolitan areas, a second requirement of a location not considered “suburban” is used to exclude those agencies employing few officers, but maintain all the resources of a large, urban department (mainly due to large amounts of funding from taxes).

Six self-report measures and a counseling services section (see Appendix E) were used in this study. In addition, demographic information such as age, gender, years of employment, and race was solicited. These items compiled to form the Oklahoma Police Survey. The label of stress or counseling was not used in the title in order to negate fears and suspicions from officers. However, the informed consent clearly stated the purpose and intentions of the project.

Notification to the proper administrators and CLEET field representatives proceeded the data collection period, as did the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects approval. Once permission was given to access a site (the location where the course took place), a cover letter explaining CLEET’s cooperation, and an introductory letter to the project were handed out to the officers. Those participating voluntarily were handed the Oklahoma Police Survey and a white business envelope. The average amount of time to complete the survey was 15 minutes, with few officers taking longer. Upon completion of the survey, the officers were instructed to seal their replies in the provided envelope. The surveys were then collected and safely stored.

This design demonstrated cluster sampling, in that only those officers who happen to be taking a continuing education class (required of all officers throughout the year) during the collection period had the opportunity to participate. To ensure better anonymity, no signatures on the informed consent document were collected. By

completing the survey, the participants demonstrated willingness to participate. Additionally, no question within the survey asked for identifying information such as name, rank, or department.

Participants

The participants were sworn officers in the State of Oklahoma. To be eligible for this study, officers had to identify themselves as employed in a rural agency (each survey contained a definition). Data for urban officers were also collected, but not analyzed for this study. The sample for this study consisted of 85 rural-identified officers. Selection of police officers came from continuing education courses offered by the Council of Law Enforcement Education and Training (CLEET), the state agency responsible for setting the training standards for all peace officers in the State of Oklahoma.

An exact percentile for the police population in the State of Oklahoma was unavailable for comparison. Previous researchers have shown a lack of diversity in policing (Crank, 2004). All applicants undergo psychological assessment as a condition of certification in the State of Oklahoma and research shows up to 90% of all agencies in the country use some form of psychological measurement in the selection process (Cochrane et al., 2003).

Instruments

Measuring Stress

To examine sources of stress among rural police officers, an instrument is needed to quantify general stress found in the everyday activities of the individual, not necessarily specific to sources of police-related stress. The Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983) was used in this study.

Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1983). This 14-item stress scale assesses perceived stress in a general format. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) measures the perceived amount of stress in one's life (Cohen et al., 1983). The response format for the PSS asks the respondent to answer a series of questions (in a "how often" format) about stressful events in the past month. Responses are on a 5-point Likert-like scale ranging from "never" (0) to "very often" (4). Higher scores indicated a greater amount of self-reported perceived stress. Reliability for this scale in this study is .82. Support for the reliability of the PSS is demonstrated with strong Cronbach's alpha levels (alpha >.84). Furthermore, past police stress research uses the PSS and found it to be a valid and reliable measurement of perceived stress (McCreary & Thompson, 2006).

Measuring Police Stress

Police stress can be measured using a variety of published instruments. Based on the conceptualizations of police stress presented earlier, any measure used needs to capture multiple sources of police stress, both on the job and within the department. For these reasons, the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op; McCreary & Thompson, 2006) and the Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Org; McCreary & Thompson, 2006) were used.

Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op; (McCreary & Thompson, 2006). The Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op) is a 20-item measure designed to capture stressful events as they relate to police officers. Stressful events in policing, in this scale, are conceptualized as originating from the "operational" aspects, such as performing the job. Furthermore, this selected measure accounts for the relationship between work and home life, often missed in other police stress scales.

Cronbach's alpha for the PSQ-Op is reported to be >.90 and shows construct, discriminate, and concurrent validity (McCreary & Thompson, 2006). Police officers respond to the measures using a 7-point Likert-like scale ranging from "no stress at all" (1) to "a lot of stress" (7). Higher scores on the measure indicate a greater level of perceived policing stress. Reliability for this scale in this study is .92. The authors of the PSQ-Op state that this survey was used on an urban police population and are interested in learning the outcome when applied to the rural police population.

Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Org; (McCreary & Thompson, 2006). The Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Org) is a 20-item measure designed to capture stressful events as they relate to police officers. Stressful events in policing, in this scale, are conceptualized as originating from the "organizational" aspects, such as supervisors. Furthermore, this selected measure accounts for the relationship between work and home life, often missed in other police stress scales.

Cronbach's alpha for the PSQ-Org is reported to be >.90 and shows construct, discriminate, and concurrent validity (McCreary & Thompson, 2006). Police officers respond to the measures using a 7-point Likert-like scale ranging from "no stress at all" (1) to "a lot of stress" (7). Higher scores on the measure indicate a greater level of perceived policing stress. Reliability for this scale in this study is .92. The authors of the PSQ-Org state that this survey was used mostly on an urban police population and are interested in learning the outcome when applied to the rural police population.

Measuring Life Satisfaction

With the extended focus on stress and its negative impacts, an examination of the positive side to the human experience is needed. For cost and brevity purposes, the

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) was used.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985). This brief 5-item measure is designed to assess satisfaction with life (Diener et al., 1985). Unique to this scale is the focus on positive experience of life (Pavot & Diener, 1993). The briefness of the measure will assist with accurately measuring satisfaction with life, while keeping the overall length of the entire study controlled. This 7-point Likert-like scale asks respondents to rate their level of agreement ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7). Cronbach's alpha for the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) is reported at .87 (Pavot & Diener, 1993). The scale is also shows good construct and discriminate validity (Pavot & Diener, 1993). Reliability for this scale in this study is .87. Previous police stress and coping research has also utilized the SWLS (Hart, Wearing, & Headey, 1993).

Measuring Coping Techniques

Similar to stress, there are multiple instruments available to assess coping styles. Since this study is unique in that it investigates stress and coping among rural officers, a vast measure of coping strategies was used. As an initial view, the COPE Inventory (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989) was used because it assesses a wide range of coping styles. Findings from the COPE Inventory can assist in the identification of specific coping techniques of officers upon which future research can focus.

COPE Inventory (Carver et al., 1989). The COPE Inventory is a 60-item measure designed to assess 15 active coping techniques of its respondents. The measure uses a 4-point Likert-like scale with responses ranging from "I usually don't do this at all" (1) to

“I usually do this a lot” (4). Subscales of the measure include coping techniques such as “positive reinterpretation and growth” and “substance use.” The reliability of the subscales of the COPE are reported to range from an alpha of .45 to .92 (Carver et al., 1989).

The subscales of the COPE are as follows: (1, PRG) positive reinterpretation and growth, (2, MDE) mental disengagement, (3, FVE) focus on venting of emotions, (4, ISS) use of instrumental social support, (5, ATC) active coping, (6, DEN) denial, (7, RLC) religious coping, (8, HUM) humor, (9, BDE) behavioral disengagement, (10, RST) restraint, (11, ESS) use of emotional social support, (12, SUB) substance use, (13, ACC) acceptance, (14, SCA) suppression of competing activities, and (15, PLG) planning. All of the subscales produce alphas above .60, with the exception of one (mental disengagement), which the authors argue is more of a “multiple-act criterion” explaining the lower alpha expectation (Carver et al., 1989).

To produce a better fit for the length demands of survey research with the police population, the following scales were eliminated from the study due to their low reliability: mental disengagement, active coping, behavioral disengagement, and acceptance. Carver et al. (1989) states that researchers may select the scales that fit their needs and are not required to use the whole scale in order to achieve a psychometrically sound instrument. Reliability for the overall COPE Inventory in this study is .84. Reliabilities for the subscales are presented in Table 3.

Measuring Social Support

Social support is related to psychological well-being in the workplace (Patterson, 2003). Social support protects police officers from the negative effects of occupational

stress (Patterson, 2003). In capturing social support for this study, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988) was used because of its focus on three sources of social support.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet et al., 1988). The MSPSS is a short 12-item measure designed to assess perceived social support. Statements relating to family, friend, and emotional support force the respondent to rate the level of agreement based on a 7-point Likert-like scale. Reponses range from "Very Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Very Strongly Agree" (7). The scale contains three subscales: Family, Friends, and Significant Other. Cronbach's coefficient alpha for each subscale is as follows: .91, .87, and .85 respectively (Zimet et al., 1988). The authors further report moderate construct validity (Zimet et al., 1988). Overall reliability for this scale in this study is .91. The subscales of social support from friends, family, and significant other in this study are .85, .92, .92, respectively.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

The total score on the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) will be negatively correlated with the total score on the Police Stress Questionnaire – Operational (PSQ-Op).

Hypothesis 2

The total score on the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) will be negatively correlated with the total score on the Police Stress Questionnaire – Organizational (PSQ-Org).

Hypothesis 3

The total score on the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) will be negatively correlated with the total score on the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS).

Hypothesis 4

The total score on the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) will be positively correlated with the total score on the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS).

Exploring Coping Mechanisms

It is my final aim in this study to provide realistic implications for the mental health community and interested law enforcement agencies. In addition to examining rural police stress, I wanted to understand coping skills used by those officers. As this is a unique undertaken, a broad assessment approach captures useful information to direct future research. The COPE Inventory assisted in this broad assessment endeavor.

Exploratory research questions provide guidance to the coping mechanisms section. Until now, the assumption is that coping is similar between rural and urban officers. Geographic, financial, and unique cultural differences warrant an initial look into identifying, as a whole, coping mechanisms of rural officers. In probing coping practices, in this study, I identified which strategies were used and their relation to the various stress measures.

In this section, I outlined the method, participants, instruments, and hypotheses. The Council for Law Enforcement Education and Training was an instrumental part in the implementation of this research. As the agency responsible for setting the standards

and training requirements for the State of Oklahoma, it was necessary to elicit their cooperation. All of the instruments serve to fill the void of rural police research. Multiple stress measures were used to assess various types of stress the officers may experience. All measures are proven sufficient for their respective domains. Finally, the hypotheses center on social support. As a major coping mechanism, social support was investigated for its relationship to the various stressors officers encounter. A broad overview of coping styles was also assessed to account for varying techniques.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In this chapter, I present data derived from the analysis of 85 completed surveys. Analysis included the surveys, demographic question section, and the knowledge of counseling resources section. Together, these items formed the Oklahoma Police Survey (OPS). I first describe the characteristics of the sample. Secondly, I present the analyses of the measures, including the Cronbach's alpha levels achieved in this project. Thirdly, I provide support for each hypothesis, followed by an overview of the coping mechanisms. Finally, I present an overview of the counseling knowledge questions.

Characteristics of the Sample and Population

Demographic characteristics of the respondents are reported in Table 1. For comparison, CLEET provided basic demographic information on full-time peace officers in the State of Oklahoma (J. Ingram, personal communication, July 7, 2008). As of June 23, 2008, there were 9,943 active full-time officers. Since each researcher defines "rural" differently, this number reflects all full-time officers in the state and not any particular geographic location. A large majority of the officer population are male (90.87%) and Caucasian (86.3%). The second largest racial group was American Indian (6.43%), followed by African-Americans (4.79%), Hispanic (1.83%), and Asian (.43%). Most peace officers were employed by a police department (54.2%), followed by state agencies (23.9%), sheriff offices (14.4%), Tribal (2.4%), schools (2.5%), and other (2.6%). The

sample in this study closely resembled the Oklahoma police officer population. Refer to Table 1 for characteristics of the sample.

Data Analysis of Measures

The means, standard deviations, and range of scores for each measure are presented in Table 2. Additionally, Cronbach's reliability coefficients were computed for each measure used in the study and are presented in Table 2. Alpha levels for all measures ranged from .82 to .92. Table 3 displays descriptive statistics for the COPE Inventory subscales, as well as the overall reliability coefficient (COPE overall). One subscale, Restraint (RST), has a low Cronbach's alpha levels of .50. The remaining ten subscales ranged in reliability levels from .60 to .92.

Correlations between each scale, excluding the COPE Inventory, are presented in Table 4. Correlations between the COPE Inventory subscales and the Perceived Stress Scale, Police Stress Questionnaire - Organizational, Police Stress Questionnaire - Operational, and the Satisfaction with Life Scale are presented in the coping mechanisms discussion section (see Table 6).

Table 1
Characteristics of the Sample

	Frequency	Percent
Ethnicity		
White	75	88.2
Black	3	3.5
American Indian/Alaskan Native	3	3.5
Other	1	1.2
More than one indicated	2	2.4
No Response	1	1.2
Gender		
Male	74	87.0
Female	9	10.6
No Response	2	2.4
Spanish/Hispanic/Latino		
No	82	96.4
Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano	0	
Yes, Puerto Rican	0	
Yes, Cuban	0	
Yes, Other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino	1	1.2
No Response	2	2.4
Current Work Environment		
County	16	18.8
City/Town	62	72.9
State	4	4.7
Prefer Not to Answer	1	1.2
No Response	2	2.4
Years in Police Field		
0-5	14	16.4
6-10	21	25.7
11-15	8	9.4
16-20	14	16.4
20+	27	31.7
No Response	1	1.2
Size of Rural Department		
51 officers or more	28	32.9
50 officers or less	57	67.1

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Each Measure

Measure	M	SD	Range	Cronbach's Alpha
PSS	22.50	6.85	4 – 38	.82
PSQ-Op	74.95	20.69	34 – 132	.92
PSQ-Org	72.41	22.24	22 – 122	.92
SWLS	25.33	5.65	8 – 35	.87
SS-Fam	22.91	4.54	12 – 28	.85
SS-Fri	20.77	5.53	8 – 28	.92
SS-Sig	23.30	5.07	7 – 28	.92
MSPSS	66.88	12.44	36 – 84	.91

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for COPE Inventory Subscales

Subscale	M	SD	Range	Cronbach's Alpha
PRG	11.35	2.10	7 - 16	.60
FVE	7.54	2.63	4 - 16	.80
ISS	10.24	2.72	4 - 16	.76
DEN†	5.35	1.81	4 - 13	.65
RLC	11.21	3.78	4 - 16	.91
HUM	9.77	3.31	4 - 16	.88
RST	9.60	2.05	5 - 15	.50
ESS	8.21	2.80	4 - 14	.82
SUB†	4.70	1.87	4 - 15	.92
PLG	11.79	2.52	5 - 16	.77
SCA	11.79	2.52	5 - 16	.78
COPE (Overall)				.84

† Negative Coping Mechanism

Table 4
Pearson Product-Moment Correlation among Scales

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. MSPSS	1.00	.85**	.78**	.84**	.47**	-.47**	-.25*	-.17
2. SS-Fam		1.00	.46**	.70**	.36**	-.38**	-.21*	-.12
3. SS-Fri			1.00	.41**	.38**	-.47**	-.29**	-.22*
4. SS-Sig				1.00	.37**	-.29**	-.11	-.08
5. SWLS					1.00	-.46**	-.16	-.19*
6. PSS						1.00	.41**	.35**
7. PSQ-Op							1.00	.50**
8. PSQ-Org								1.00

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (one-tailed)

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

The total score on the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) was negatively correlated with the total score on the Police Stress Questionnaire – Operational (PSQ-Op). The regression equation is significant when the total score of perceived social support is entered as an independent variable and the total score on the Police Stress Questionnaire – Operational as the dependent variable, $R^2 = .06$, adjusted $R^2 = .05$, $F(1, 80) = 5.16$, $p = .026$.

When examining the subscales of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Social Support from Family, Social Support from Friends, and Social Support from Significant Other) in a stepwise regression analysis, the regression equation was significant for social support from friends, $F(1, 80) = 7.10$, $p = .009$. However, the other two types of social support (Family and Significant Other) are not significant predictors of operational police stress.

Hypothesis 2

The total score on the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) will be negatively correlated with the total score on the Police Stress Questionnaire – Organizational (PSQ-Org). The total score on the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support was not found to be negatively correlated with the total score on the Police Stress Questionnaire – Organizational ($r = -.17$, $p = .061$). Thus, the hypothesis was not supported by the data.

In an exploratory analysis, the rural data was divided according to the amount of officers (51 or more and 50 or less). Among the larger rural areas ($N = 28$), with 51 officers or more, there was a correlation between the total score on the MSPSS and PSQ-Org ($r = -.43$, $p = .011$). This relationship was not found among the smaller rural departments ($N = 53$; $r = -.12$, $p = .20$). A t-test for significant differences also supports these findings, $t(85) = 3.74$, $p < .000$. The rural departments with 51 or more officers reported higher levels of organizational stress (M = 84.39, SD = 19.05) compared to the smaller rural departments of 50 or less (M = 66.53, SD = 21.45).

Hypothesis 3

The total score on the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) was negatively correlated with the total score on the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). Lending support to the hypothesis, the regression equation was significant when the total score of perceived social support is entered as an independent variable and the total score on the Perceived Stress Scale as the dependent variable, $R^2 = .22$, adjusted $R^2 = .21$, $F(1, 81) = 22.03$, $p < .001$.

When examining the subscales of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support in a stepwise regression analysis, the regression equation was significant for social support from friends, $F(1, 81) = 22.77$, $p < .001$. However, the other two types of social support (Family and Significant Other) are not significant predictors of perceived stress.

Hypothesis 4

The total score on the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) was positively correlated with the total score on the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). The regression equation is significant when the total score of perceived social support is entered as an independent variable and the total score on the Satisfaction with Life Scale as the dependent variable, $R^2 = .22$, adjusted $R^2 = .21$, $F(1, 78) = 21.19$, $p < .001$.

When examining the subscales of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support in a stepwise regression analysis, the regression equation was significant for social support from friends and social support from significant other, $R^2 = .22$, adjusted $R^2 = .20$, $F(2, 78) = 10.48$, $p < .001$. The remaining type of perceived social support (Family) was not a significant predictor of satisfaction with life.

Coping Mechanisms

The purpose of the coping mechanisms assessment was to identify what techniques rural officers report using. A ranking of the techniques used is presented in Table 5. The correlations between each method of coping and the PSS, PSQ-Op, PSQ-Org, and SWLS are presented in Table 6.

The COPE Inventory asks respondents to indicate what they generally do and feel in response to stressful events. The four responses are: (1) "I usually don't do this at all," (2) "I usually do this a little bit," (3) "I usually do this a medium amount," and (4) "I usually do this a lot." The COPE Inventory assess coping across a wide spectrum of possible coping responses to stressful events. Table 5 displays, in descending order, the means of endorsement ratings for each type of coping response. The larger means represent greater endorsement of using that particular coping strategy in response to stressful events.

Counseling Knowledge Questions

At the end of the OPS, officers were presented with seven questions related to their knowledge of counseling/psychological services in their area (see Appendix E). The findings are presented in Table 7. The purpose of this section was to sample rural Oklahoma police officers about their knowledge of counseling services in their area. As expected and repeatedly shown in the literature, rural departments are limited in their availability of a full time therapist (8.2%) and part time therapist (11.8%). Furthermore, about half the sampled officers belonged to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that offered counseling (55.3%). This survey did not ask if they took advantage of such programs or services, rather only their knowledge about their availability. Other sources of potential therapeutic help are community mental health centers and police chaplains. A large percentage of officers (72.9%) knew of a community mental health center in their area and a lower percentage (41.2%) reported having a police chaplain on their staff.

Finally, almost two thirds of the officers (62.5%) reported needing more counseling services available in their area. Most officers (70.6%) reported preferring to

speak to a fellow officer, rather than a therapist. This may suggest a contradiction, in that officers desire more counseling services, but do not want to talk to a counselor. However, officers may have read the question as more counseling services were needed in their area, but not necessarily for them.

Table 5
Means of Coping Subscales in Descending Order

Ranking of Coping Styles	Mean	SD
1. Suppression of Competing Activities	11.79	2.52
1. Planning	11.79	2.52
2. Positive Reinterpretation/Growth	11.35	2.10
3. Religious Coping	11.21	3.78
4. Instrumental Social Support	10.24	2.72
5. Humor	9.77	3.31
6. Restraint	9.60	2.05
7. Emotional Social Support	8.21	2.80
8. Focus on & Venting of Emotions	7.54	2.63
9. Denial	5.35	1.81
10. Substance Use	4.70	1.87

Table 6
Correlations of Coping Subscales with Stress Scales and Life Satisfaction

Type of Coping	PSS	PSQ-Op	PSQ-Org	SWLS
1. Positive Reinterpretation/Growth	-.24*	-.06	-.17	.27**
2. Focus on & Venting of Emotions	.15	.07	.10	.05
3. Instrumental Social Support	-.19*	.05	-.14	.24*
4. Religious Coping	-.10	.15	-.05	.19*
5. Humor	.12	-.08	.28**	-.16
6. Restraint	-.10	.04	.13	.05
7. Emotional Social Support	-.09	-.08	-.12	.13
8. Planning	-.34**	-.07	-.08	.16
9. Suppression of Competing Activities	-.34**	-.07	-.08	.16
10. Denial†	.28**	.03	.19	-.12
11. Substance Use†	.12	.15	.08	-.08

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, one-tailed correlations, † denotes negative coping

Table 7
Counseling Resource Knowledge

Item	Frequency	Percent
Full-Time Therapist in Police Dept.		
Yes	7	8.2
No	74	87.1
Unsure	2	2.4
No Response	2	2.4
Part-Time Therapist in Police Dept.		
Yes	10	11.8
No	70	82.4
Unsure	2	2.4
No Response	3	3.5
EAP with Counseling Available		
Yes	47	55.3
No	31	36.5
Unsure	5	5.9
No Response	2	2.4
Could go to Community Mental Health Center		
Yes	62	72.9
No	12	14.1
Unsure	9	10.6
No Response	2	2.4
Police Chaplain on Department		
Yes	35	41.2
No	46	54.1
Unsure	1	1.2
No Response	3	3.5
More Counseling Services Needed		
Yes	53	62.5
No	28	32.9
No Response	4	4.7
Speak to Officer Rather than Therapist		
Yes	60	70.6
No	22	25.9
No Response	3	3.5

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

My primary purpose in this study was to examine the relationship among perceived stress, operational police stress, organizational police stress, satisfaction with life, coping strategies, and perceived social support in rural police officers in the State of Oklahoma. Knowledge of counseling resources among rural police officers was also assessed.

Hypothesis 1

There was a significant negative relationship between the total score for perceived social support and operational police stress, which is consistent with the original hypothesis. Additionally, regression analysis is significant for the predictor variable of total perceived social support. However, the coefficient of determination is rather small when considering social support as an overall score, therefore, I suggest future research examine this area more closely. Stepwise regression analysis is significant only for the subscale of perceived social support from friends and not from family or significant other. This finding was surprising.

The data may indicate that officers benefit from their friends' support, rather than others, when it comes to handling operational-related work stress. Police officers form close relationships with their comrades. Although not assessed in this study, many officers form close friendships with other police officers. The profession divides into an

"us" versus "them" mentality and only "like minds" can understand their pressures and demands. Similarly, Alexander and Walker (1994) reported only 20% of officers in their study reported taking matters of work home after the shift. Making a conscious effort to dissociate with work as much as possible when not working may be displayed in the findings, in that family and significant others are not significantly related to operational police stress. Finally, Crank (2004) argues that many law enforcement personnel decide not to burden their spouses with their hassles from work in an attempt to spare them the stress.

Hypothesis 2

The total score for perceived social support was not found to have a negative relationship with organizational police stress among all rural officers sampled, lending no support to the hypothesis. Given the significant relationship with operational police stress, this lack of a finding was interesting. However, in an exploratory analysis, when examining social support's relationship with organizational police stress, a difference emerges when looking at the size of the rural department.

Whereas questions may arise to the impact of organizational police stress in rural departments, these findings may suggest that those "larger" rural departments are large enough in size to experience more organizational stress, similar to that found in urban agencies. The smaller rural departments may not be large enough to produce significant amounts of stress for the rural officers working in departments with 50 or fewer officers. This may be due to several reasons. First, in the smaller rural departments, officers may be responsible for administrative and organizational tasks, allowing them more control. These smaller rural departments may not have an independent group of officers who

solely do administrative and organizational tasks. Urban police departments, on the other hand, frequently have officers assigned to administrative branches of the department, where little or no patrol work is done. Secondly, the infrastructure may not exist to the extent of larger rural or urban departments, so the sources of stress found on the PSQ-Org may not be applicable. Using both police stress questionnaires for the rural population was relatively new. My study may suggest that the application of the Police Stress Questionnaire – Organizational to those smaller rural departments needs further research.

Hypothesis 3

There was a significant negative relationship between the total score for perceived social support and perceived stress among the officers. Regression analysis is significant for the predictor variable of total perceived social support. Additionally, stepwise regression analysis is significant for social support from friends and not from family and significant others.

After examining the effects of social support on work and life stress among 233 urban police officers, Patterson (2003) concludes, "seeking social support was effective for reducing stress rising from work events, but not life events" (p. 224). This finding from the current study does not support Patterson's findings. Here, social support from friends is negatively related with work stress (see Hypothesis 1) and life stress as assessed by the Perceived Stress Scale. Differences in findings may be the result of the rural population used, suggesting more research is needed in the rural areas.

These findings suggest social support from friends plays an important role in the perceived stress of police officers. An understanding of police culture reveals the strong bond officers feel with one another, brought together by a profession. My findings may

reflect the trend of officers seeking support from their peers, who may also be as instrumental in perceived life stress, as with police operational stress. Additionally, if a major source of stress outside of the job is the family or significant other, officers may turn to their friends for support.

Hypothesis 4

There was a significant positive relationship between the total score on perceived social support and satisfaction with life. Regression analysis is significant for the predictor variable of total perceived social support. In addition, stepwise regression analysis is significant for perceived social support from friends and from a significant other as predictor variables.

This finding may indicate the importance of social support, specifically from friends and significant others, as instrumental in an officer's satisfaction with life. Although social support from family does not appear in a multiple regression analysis as significant, there is a moderate correlation between perceived social support from family and satisfaction with life.

Coping Mechanisms Discussion

In order to combat stress officers employ a variety of coping mechanisms. My primary aim here was to understand which coping styles officers used in response to stressful events, as determined with the COPE Inventory. Table 5 displays 11 coping responses and the mean participation ratings of the rural officers in the sample. The negative coping styles, Substance Use and Denial, are the least endorsed methods of coping, whereas Suppression of Competing Activities and Planning were the most endorsed styles of coping.

Substance Use may rank low in this sample for many reasons. One possible explanation is that the police profession promotes health and physical fitness. Substance use would counter these ideals and ultimately make their work and life situations more difficult. Another possible explanation is the social bias encountered when officers (upholders of the law) are admitting to using substances as coping techniques.

Suppression of Competing Activities is defined as avoiding distraction with other events in order to deal with the stressor at hand (Carver et al., 1989). Officers endorsed Suppression of Competing Activities as the most popular coping response. Policing requires that officers be able to bring order quickly in chaotic events. By being able to suppress other activities, officers can devote their energy to the stressful event at hand. Officers in training are taught to be aware of a multitude of information (surroundings, people, possible weapons, distractions, etc). It is imperative that they be able to focus on the task. This finding may indicate that these fundamental techniques of policing are being applied to coping with stressful events.

Planning, as equally endorsed as Suppression of Competing Activities, is another popular coping style among rural law enforcement. Carver et al. (1989) define Planning as "thinking about how to cope with a stressor" and "coming up with action strategies" (p. 268). It is not surprising that Planning ranks just as high as Suppression of Competing Activities, in that, theoretically, the best planning can take place when distractions are minimized. Once again, police culture may be reflected in the coping data of the sample. Planning, as a coping style, aims to design and implement actions. The role of the police officer is often that of taking action, as well as methodical in execution of certain duties.

Also of note, Emotional Social Support and Focus on and Venting of Emotions are among the lesser used positive coping styles. Carver et al. (1989) define Emotional Social Support as "getting moral support, sympathy, or understanding" (p. 269). Focusing on and venting emotions is defined as focusing on the distress and ventilating those feelings. Both of these coping styles are emotion-focused. Given the mental health stigma and hyper-masculine characteristics of policing, these findings may be reflecting the negative views of emotions and feelings.

These findings must also take into consideration why emotions are downplayed in policing. Such an act can be viewed as survival, since officers constantly experience the negative sides of society. When danger is imminent, officers must work out a solution. Such a mindset requires quick problem-solving capabilities, instead of an introspective, emotional approach. These findings do not suggest that rural police officers are void of emotions and feelings. Future studies should expand on Alexander and Walker's (1994) work and examine coping techniques used on and off duty, as the situational factors may be influencing which coping responses are used.

I also aimed to understand coping styles of rural officers in relation to the three stress scales and their reported satisfaction with life. In response to general life stress, Positive Reinterpretation and Growth, Instrumental Social Support, Planning, and Suppression of Competing Activities showed negative correlations with the Perceived Stress Scale. These findings may suggest that as an officer increases participation in these coping styles, his or her level of perceived stress decreases, or vice versa. In addition, Denial was positively correlated with the Perceived Stress Scale, possibly

suggesting that the use of denial as a coping mechanism increased his or her level of perceived stress.

In response to satisfaction with life, Positive Reinterpretation and Growth, Instrumental Social Support (i.e., seeking advice or information), and Religious Coping were positively correlated with the Satisfaction with Life Scale. The findings may suggest that employing these coping responses aids in the satisfaction with life among rural police officers. However, since the analysis was correlational, cause and effect cannot be determined.

In response to organizational police stress, Humor was positively correlated with the Police Stress Questionnaire – Organizational. No other coping style was correlated with the Police Stress Questionnaire – Organizational. Given the lack of relationship between the coping styles and the two police stress scales, this finding may need to be further investigated in future research. No coping style was correlated with the Police Stress Questionnaire – Operational. This finding was also interesting, because several coping subscales of the COPE Inventory proved to be related to the Perceived Stress Scale, which measures general life stress. Since the Police Stress Questionnaire – Operational and Organizational measure specific kinds of job-related stress, these findings would suggest that the coping styles measured by the COPE Inventory are not related to police stress.

However, it may be that the use of coping techniques is slightly altered to deal with the police environment or implemented in a way that is not "measureable" by the COPE Inventory. Finally, coping is a personalized characteristic. We can speak of group behavior, but individuals still exist. There may be much variability in the coping

responses of the officers that it is difficult to determine how they respond to each police stressor. In addition, the sources of stress within the practice of policing and the organization are also great. For example, certain stressors within the operational aspects of the job may be viewed as stressful, but the overall practice of policing may not be viewed the same way. Future studies should include different measures of coping and contain a "total" coping score to look at overall coping influence.

Counseling Resource Knowledge Questions Discussion

The purpose of the counseling resource knowledge questions was to assess the availability and awareness of counseling services for police officers in rural Oklahoma. If stress or other life issues became too detrimental in their life, officers would need to know where to go and, more importantly, what services are available. This portion of the Oklahoma Police Survey did not assess whether they used such services. Appendix E presents the Counseling Resource Knowledge questions.

Not surprisingly, only 8% of officers reported having a full-time therapist (therapist, counselor, and psychologist) on their department. Additionally, almost 12% reported having a part-time therapist. Rural departments are financially strapped in their operating budget. Larger departments may be able to afford an officer to work "within" the department, but those smaller agencies cannot afford one. Finally, given the reduced amount of officers, city officials and police administration may feel that they do not need a therapist.

A common form of psychological/spiritual assistance for many officers is the police chaplain. These individuals provide spiritual help to officers enduring difficult life issues. Of the rural officers in this sample, 41% identified the availability of a police

chaplain. This finding is unique in that many studies of psychological services available to officers solely look at clinical and counseling psychologists serving urban areas. Counseling, in the form of spiritual guidance, is overlooked. Psychological help can exist outside of the 50-minute, scheduled appointment with a psychologist. Future studies need to address the nontraditional methods of receiving psychological support.

Fortunately, therapists within the department are not the only options theoretically available to an officer. As part of receiving health insurance from the city, county, or state, officers may be entitled to access an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) with counseling services. Slightly more than half (55%) reported having this option available to them. However, it was not assessed whether officers used this or any other method of psychological help.

Another option found "outside" of the department is community mental health agencies. A larger portion of the officers (73%) knew of this resource in their area. Although this number may sound adequate, given the rural locations, officers may not be likely to frequent a community mental health agency. Stigmatization of mental health deters officers from psychological assistance. In addition, if a rural officer comes from the community he or she patrols, he or she is likely to stand out in the town. Going to a mental health agency located in their community may be seen as bringing unwanted attention.

I demonstrated in this study that rural officers experience stress from their occupation. It is in the best interest of the officer, the public, and the hiring agency to maintain the mental health of their officers. Similar to counseling, policing brings individuals into close contact with the difficult sides of human life. These eventually

weigh on the officers. While social support and positive coping skills can help the officer carry these less attractive sides of policing, when interference arises in the work and home spheres, more is needed.

In the sample, nearly 71% of the officers endorsed “I would prefer to talk with a fellow officer rather than a therapist.” This finding is not surprising given the widely understood stigma officers encounter when it comes to seeking mental health services. As an example, after completing the survey, one officer pulled me aside and said, “I drive 40 miles out of my way to see someone, because I don’t want my guys back home to see a chink in my armor.” Whereas much research focuses on the urban officer, these findings indicate that rural officers feel the same way when it comes to mental health services. When asked whether they felt more counseling services were needed in their area, 62% of the sample endorsed a greater need for such services. This presents an interesting challenge for rural practitioners. The majority of officers believe they need a greater availability of counseling services, but at the same time, would rather speak to a fellow police officer. However, it is possible that officers read the questions as more counseling services where needed in their area, but not for them. Future research should consider this distinction more carefully.

In conducting this research, I had opportunity to collect information also from urban officers. Although the bulk of the urban police officer data is not used in this analysis, their identification of counseling resources provides contrast to the rural officers (see Table 8). The findings are based on a small sample ($N = 41$).

Table 8
Urban Counseling Resource Knowledge Comparison

Item	Frequency	Percent	(Rural)
Full-Time Therapist in Police Dept.			
Yes	6	14.6	8.2
No	32	78.0	87.1
Unsure	3	7.3	2.4
No Response	0		2.4
Part-Time Therapist in Police Dept.			
Yes	4	9.8	11.8
No	33	80.5	82.4
Unsure	4	9.8	2.4
No Response	0		3.5
EAP with Counseling Available			
Yes	21	51.2	55.3
No	10	24.4	36.5
Unsure	9	22.0	5.9
No Response	1	2.4	2.4
Could go to Community Mental Health Center			
Yes	18	43.9	72.9
No	9	22.0	14.1
Unsure	14	34.1	10.6
No Response	0		2.4
Police Chaplain on Department			
Yes	17	41.5	41.2
No	21	51.2	54.1
Unsure	3	7.3	1.2
No Response	0		3.5
More Counseling Services Needed			
Yes	27	65.9	62.5
No	11	26.8	32.9
No Response	3	7.3	4.7
Speak to Officer Rather than Therapist			
Yes	23	56.1	70.6
No	15	36.6	25.9
No Response	3	7.3	3.5

Two stark differences stand out in comparing urban and rural knowledge of counseling resources. First, in response to "I could go to a community mental health center if I needed to," fewer urban officers (43.9%) felt they could, compared to the rural officers (72.9%). The large percent of rural officers who feel they can go to a community mental health center is refreshing, given that mental health services in rural areas is often considered sparse. A possible explanation for the disparity may be that despite a lack of resources in rural areas, those officers feel able to seek services in a nearby town or county, if they needed. The urban officers, on the other hand, may only be considering their local mental health centers, which may be located in their jurisdiction.

Another difference in responses among all the officers was found in answer to the question "I would prefer to talk with a fellow officer rather than a therapist." A greater percentage of rural law enforcement (70.6%) endorsed a desire to speak with a fellow officer. Just over half of urban officers (56.1%) desired to speak with a fellow officer. The larger percentage of rural officers desiring to speak with a comrade over a therapist may be the result of rural police culture. In the smaller departments, the officers are more familiar with their coworkers. They may also live in closer proximity than urban officers. This may allow rural officers to rely more on each other for support.

Implications

The rural officers in this study reported a desire to speak with a fellow officer rather than a therapist. Furthermore, many officers saw a need for more counseling services to be available in their area. Finding a solution within these parameters may allow more officers access to care. Rural mental health care poses many challenges to the practitioner and the consumer. Police culture presents unique obstacles that must be

addressed for successful integration of mental health as a beneficial service to policing. Mental health care is not a new concept in the law enforcement world. However, these operations undoubtedly depend on financial resources and the work force to justify its existence. The rural agencies must do without such benefits.

Many larger departments contain mental health or behavioral services units to help their officers and families (Blau, 1994). Support from peers or professionals may only occur after a traumatic event, usually in the form of critical incident debriefing. This form of intervention is not exclusive to the law enforcement world. Little literature can be found of access to critical incident debriefing for agencies in rural areas. While attention is paid to helping officers after the event, what about the wear and tear of daily police work? Assisting officers, in a therapeutic manner, may provide the prevention needed to lower absenteeism, turnover in smaller departments, mental health issues, and increase overall quality of life. These findings further endorse the practice of peer-support counseling as a viable option for police officers. Many larger departments already provide peer-support counseling or other specially trained police officers to respond in times of crisis (Kureczka, 1999). This method may be especially attractive to rural agencies, as it seems cost-effective. Furthermore, counties or groups of counties can band together to offer such a service. This service may be offered in an individual format or as a group.

Janik (1999) explains, "Peer support provides an opportunity for public safety personnel and their families to confidentially discuss personal and/or professional problems with one of their own" (p. 265). This model fits well with police culture, in that outsiders (i.e. those not related to the profession) are viewed as difficult to confide in and

trust (Kureczka, 1999). In such a model, a counselor or psychologist can act as a consultant to the implementation and maintenance of the peer support group. Any interaction on the therapist's part with law enforcement must emphasize a nonjudgmental attitude.

Several aspects of peer support must be considered when planning. Who is selected to be a peer supporter? Who will be in charge? How will the peer supporters be trained? Additionally, Finn and Tomz (1999) believe several ethical and legal issues arise when instituting peer support in police agencies. For instance, peer supporters are not mandated to maintain confidentiality. If someone seeking services relates that they broke a law, how will this be handled?

Implementing peer support in rural areas requires special consideration. First, since most rural agencies have less than 10 officers, combining with other local departments allows for a pool of resources. Secondly, due to fewer officers in rural agencies, patrol officers have frequent contact with their supervisors. Will having a supervisor in a peer support group influence the dynamics? Will lower-level officer be less likely to share information or seek help if they think their career is in jeopardy? Third, rural officers frequently cite a problem with higher visibility in their small towns. Any peer support group must consider location, because officers may not want to meet within their own jurisdiction.

If implementing peer groups are not attractive for certain areas, officers can volunteer for special training in becoming a peer-supporter. Officers can learn interpersonal skills, how to identify peers in need of help, when to refer, and basic crisis intervention. These courses should be distinct from similar mental health classes, in that

they focus on assisting fellow officers, not interacting with the public. It may prove beneficial for departments, or state agencies like CLEET, to collaborate with a local community mental health center or university counseling staff, to provide the training to start such a program. Since most states require continuing education credits for their certified officers, a few classes covering peer support skills can be attractive and pioneer the way to better care for rural officers.

REFERENCES

Alexander, D. A., & Walker, L. G. (1994). A study of methods used by Scottish police officers to cope with work-induced stress. *Stress Medicine, 10*, 131-138.

Bakker, A. B., & Heuven, E. (2006). Emotional dissonance, burnout, and in-role performance among nurses and police officers. *International Journal of Stress Management, 13*, 423-440.

Bartol, C. R., Bergen, G. T., Volckens, J. S., & Knoras, K. M. (1992). Women in small-town policing: Job performance and stress. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 19*, 240-259.

Beutler, L. E., Nussbaum, P. D., & Meredith, K. E. (1988). Changing personality patterns of police officers. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 19*, 503-507.

Blau, T. H. (1994). *Psychological services for law enforcement*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Borum, R., & Philpot, C. (1993). Therapy with law enforcement couples: Clinical management of the "High-Risk Lifestyle". *The American Journal of Family Therapy, 21*, 122-135.

Brough, P. (2004). Comparing the influence of traumatic and organizational stressors on the psychological health of police, fire, and ambulance officers. *International Journal of Stress Management, 11*, 227-244.

Carlson, N. R. (2002). *Foundations of physiological psychology* (5th ed.). Boston: Allon and Bacon.

Carmen, A. d., Greene, H. T., Nation, D. D., & Osho, G. S. (2007). Minority women in policing in Texas: An attitudinal analysis. *Criminal Justice Studies, 20*, 281-294.

Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., & Weintraub, J. K. (1989). Assessing coping strategies: A theoretically based approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 56*, 267-283.

Christensen, W., & Crank, J. P. (2001). Police work and culture in a nonurban setting: An ethnographic analysis. *Police Quarterly, 4*, 69-98.

Cochrane, R. E., Tett, R. P., & Vandecreek, L. (2003). Psychological testing and the selection of police officers. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 30*, 511-537.

Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., & Mermelstein, R. (1983). A global measure of perceived stress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 24*, 385-396.

Cohen, S., Kessler, R. C., & Gordon, L. U. (Eds). (1997). *Measuring stress: A guide for health and social scientists.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Crank, J. P. (2004). *Understanding police culture* (2nd ed.). Bethesda, MD: Anderson Publishing Co.

Crank, J. P., & Caldero, M. (1991). The production of occupational stress in medium-sized police agencies: A survey of line officers in eight municipal departments. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 19*, 339-349.

Delprino, R. P., & Bahn, C. (1999). National survey of the extent and nature of psychological services in police departments. In L. Territo & J. D. Sewell (Eds.),

Stress management in law enforcement (pp. 305-315). Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.

Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The Satisfaction With Life Scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 49*, 71-75.

Finn, P., & Tomz, J. E. (1999). Using peer supporters to help address law enforcement stress. In L. Territo & J. D. Sewell (Eds.), *Stress management in law enforcement* (pp. 273-285). Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.

Folkman, S. (1997). Positive psychological states and coping with severe stress. *Social Science & Medicine, 45,* 1207-1221.

Frydenberg, E. (2002). *Beyond coping: Meeting goals, visions, and challenges.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Gentz, D. (1999). Critical incident reactions: A comparison of two studies ten years apart in the same police department. In L. Territo & J. D. Sewell (Eds.), *Stress management in law enforcement* (pp. 259-263). Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.

Hails, J., & Borum, R. (2003). Police training and specialized approaches to respond to people with mental illnesses. *Crime & Delinquency, 49*, 52-61.

Hancock, P. A., & Desmond, P. A. (Eds.). (2001). *Stress, workload, and fatigue*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Hargrove, D. S., & Breazeale, R. L. (1993). Psychologists and rural services: Addressing a new agenda. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 24*, 319-324.

Hart, P. M., Wearing, A. J., & Headey, B. (1993). Assessing police work experiences: Development of the Police Daily Hassles and Uplifts Scales. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 21*, 553-572.

Hartley, D. (2004). Rural health disparities, population health, and rural culture. *American Journal of Public Health, 94*, 1675-1678.

He, N., Zhao, J., & Ren, L. (2005). Do race and gender matter in police stress? A preliminary assessment of the interactive effects. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 33*, 535-547.

Hickman, M. J., & Reaves, B. A. (2003). *Local police departments 2000* (No. NCJ 196002). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

Human, J., & Wasem, C. (1991). Rural mental health in America. *American Psychologist, 46*, 232-239.

Hutner, M., & Windle, C. (1991). NIMH support of rural mental health. *American Psychologist, 46*, 240-243.

Jackson, S. E., & Maslach, C. (1982). After-effects of job-related stress: Families as victims. *Journal of Occupational Behaviour, 3*, 63-77.

Jacob, H. (Ed.). (1974). *Potential for reform of criminal justice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Janik, J. (1999). Who needs peer support? In L. Territo & J. D. Sewell (Eds.), *Stress management in law enforcement* (pp. 265-271). Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.

Johnson, L. B., Todd, M., & Subramanian, G. (2005). Violence in police families: Work-family spillover. *Journal of Family Violence, 20*, 3-12.

Kannady, G. (1999). Developing stress-resistant police families. In L. Territo & J. D. Sewell (Eds.), *Stress management in law enforcement* (pp. 157-164). Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.

Kroes, W. H. (1976). *Society's victim, the policeman: An analysis of job stress in policing*. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.

Kureczka, A. W. (1999). Critical incident stress in law enforcement. In L. Territo & J. D. Sewell (Eds.), *Stress management in law enforcement* (pp. 237-245). Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.

Lord, V. B., Gray, D. O., & Pond, S. B. (1991). The police stress inventory: Does it measure stress? *Journal of Criminal Justice, 19,* 139-149.

Malloy, T. E., & Mays, G. L. (1999). The police stress hypothesis: A critical evaluation. In L. Territo & J. D. Sewell (Eds.), *Stress management in law enforcement* (pp. 55-76). Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.

Martinussen, M., Richardson, A. M., & Burke, R. J. (2007). Job demands, job resources, and burnout among police officers. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 35*, 239-249.

McCreary, D. R., & Thompson, M. M. (2006). Development of two reliable and valid measures of stressors in policing: The Operational and Organizational Police Stress Questionnaires. *International Journal of Stress Management, 13*, 494-518.

Miller, L. (2007). Police families: Stresses, syndromes, and solutions. *The American Journal of Family Therapy, 35*, 21-40.

Morash, M., Haarr, R., & Kwak, D.-H. (2006). Multilevel influences on police stress. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice, 22*, 26-43.

Murray, J. D., & Keller, P. A. (1991). Psychology and rural America. *American Psychologist, 46*, 220-231.

New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. (2003). *Achieving the promise: Transforming mental health care in America. Final report.* DHHS Pub. No. SMA-03-3832. Rockville, MD: Author.

Palmiotto, M. J. (1997). *Policing: Concepts, strategies, and current issues in American police forces*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.

Patterson, G. T. (2003). Examining the effects of coping and social support on work and life stress among police officers. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 31*, 215-226.

Pavot, W., & Diener, E. (1993). Review of the Satisfaction With Life Scale. *Psychological Assessment, 5*, 164-172.

Quire, D. S., & Blount, W. R. (1999). A coronary risk profile study of male police officers: Focus on cholesterol. In L. Territo & J. D. Sewell (Eds.), *Stress management in law enforcement* (pp. 91-100). Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.

Reiser, M., & Geiger, S. P. (1984). Police officer as victim. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 15*, 315-323.

Resick, P. A. (2001). *Stress and trauma*. New York: Taylor and Francis.

Schuler, R. S. (1980). Definition and conceptualization of stress in organizations. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 25,* 184-215.

Scott, Y. M. (2004). Stress among rural and small-town patrol officers: A survey of Pennsylvania municipal agencies. *Police Quarterly, 7*, 237-261.

Seaward, B. L. (2004). *Managing stress: Principles and strategies for health and wellbeing* (4th ed.). Boston: Jones and Bartlett.

Selye, H. (1976). *The stress of life*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Selye, H. (Ed.). (1980). *Selye's guide to stress research* (Vol. 1). New York: Van Nostrand & Reinhold Co.

Snyder, C. R. (Ed.). (1999). *Coping: The psychology of what works*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Southworth, R. N. (1999). Taking the job home. In L. Territo & J. D. Sewell (Eds.), *Stress management in law enforcement* (pp. 141-148). Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.

Territo, L., & Sewell, J. D. (Eds.). (1999). *Stress management in law enforcement*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.

Thompson, B., Kirk-Brown, A., & Brown, D. (2001). Women police: The impact of work stress on family members. In P. A. Hancock & P. A. Desmond (Eds.), *Stress, workload, and fatigue* (pp. 200-210). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Toch, H. (2002). *Stress in policing*. Washington, DC: APA.

Violanti, J. M., Andrew, M. E., Burchfiel, C. M., Dorn, J., Hartley, T., & Miller, D. B. (2006). Posttraumatic stress symptoms and subclinical cardiovascular disease in police officers. *International Journal of Stress Management, 13*, 541-554.

Violanti, J. M., & Aron, F. (1995). Police stressors: Variations in perception among police personnel. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 23*, 287-294.

Watson, G. (1999). Thoughts on preventive counseling for police officers. In L. Territo & J. D. Sewell (Eds.), *Stress management in law enforcement* (pp. 341-348). Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.

Weisheit, R. A., Falcone, D. N., & Wells, L. E. (1994). *Rural crime and rural policing* (No. NCJ 150223). Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice.

Weisheit, R. A., Wells, L. E., & Falcone, D. N. (1995). *Crime and policing in rural and small-town America: An overview of the issues*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice.

Zimet, G. D., Dahlem, N. W., Zimet, S. G., & Farley, G. K. (1988). The multidimensional scale of perceived social support. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 52*, 30-41.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	Monday, October 15, 2007
IRB Application No	ED0791
Proposal Title:	Stress and Coping Among Police Officers in Rural Oklahoma

Reviewed and Processed as:	Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved   Protocol Expires: 10/14/2008

Principal
Investigator(s

Kyle Page	Sue Jacobs
1108 North Duck #3	431 Willard
Stillwater, OK 740753606	Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☑ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Sue C. Jacobs, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B

CLEET APPROVAL LETTER

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

COUNCIL ON LAW ENFORCEMENT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2401 Egypt Road • Ada, Oklahoma 74820-0669
Telephone : (405) 239-5100 • Fax: (580) 310-9143
www.cleet.state.ok.us

Jeanie Nelson, Ph.D. Director

July 23, 2007

Kyle Scott Page
1108 North Duck, No. 3
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074

Re: **"Stress and Coping Among Police Officers in Rural Oklahoma"**

Dear Mr. Page:

I have been instructed by Director Jeanie Nelson to respond to your letter of May 28, 2007. In that letter, you request the assistance of this agency in conducting support research for your above-referenced master's thesis. Specifically, you have requested access to CLEET continuing education students in order to conduct research surveys.

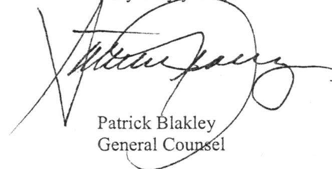
As the director of the state's primary law enforcement training agency, Dr. Nelson believes quite strongly in supporting your endeavor and is eager to assist you in any reasonable way. However, the access to survey participants that you have requested must be conditioned on the restrictions you outlined in the third paragraph of your letter. I paraphrase them as follows:

- CLEET students must be advised at the outset of the purpose of the research and the rights of participants.
- It must be made clear to CLEET students that their participation is entirely voluntary. They may not be coerced into participation and may not reasonably perceive that such is the case.
- Any participant must be allowed to withdraw from participation at any time.
- Data must be reported only in aggregate; neither individuals nor law enforcement agencies can be specifically identified at any point in the survey.

Dr. Nelson will direct Mr. Emmons and the remainder of the CLEET field representatives to assist you as necessary. On behalf of the Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training and Dr. Nelson, I wish you the very best of luck in this very worthwhile project.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (405) 239-5100.

Very truly yours,



Patrick Blakley
General Counsel

cc: Assistant Direct Spencer
CLEET Field Representatives

APPENDIX C

INTRODUCTION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Okla. State Univ.
IRB
Approved 10/15/07
Expires 10/14/08
IRB# ED0791

Dear Oklahoma Police Officers,

My name is Kyle Page and I am a graduate student at Oklahoma State University. My field of study is community counseling and I am conducting this research as part of the completion requirements for the Masters degree. I invite you to voluntarily participate in this project on rural police stress and coping.

My interest in law enforcement goes back many years. My great grandfather was a police officer in Newfield, NJ, then a population of fewer than 1,000 residents. I heard many stories about the changes he made in his hometown and quickly fell in love with the profession. After moving to Oklahoma in the early 90's, I engrossed myself with anything police. My mission in life was to become a police officer in Oklahoma.

At the age of 14, I joined the local Tulsa Police Explorer program. These organizations are sponsored by the Boy Scouts of America and operated by the local police forces. Among many things, I learned city geography, ten-codes, and how to conduct traffic stops. More importantly, I was privileged to ride along with police officers monthly in the City of Tulsa over a five year period. I witnessed and experienced first-hand all types of calls for service. I quickly discovered that the real police world is not like the popular reality police show, but I remained interested and intrigued. I am still involved with the Tulsa Police Explorers as an Associate Advisor to the program.

After awhile my attention shifted from the calls to which we responded to how the officers were doing. I noticed how officers were personally affected by the many rules and regulations, jurisdictional boundaries, and the types of calls. I decided that my contribution to society would be ensuring the mental health of our officers. I am fortunate for these past experiences, because they provided me with an insight into the officer's world. I know I can make a difference and help officers because I have this view, as opposed to an outsider with no understanding of what goes on in the police profession.

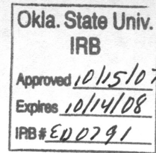
I request for your voluntary participation in this research project. Collected data will focus on officers as a whole in this state. I am taking a look at general levels of stress, different kinds of police-specific stress (i.e. rules, co-workers, media), and how officers are coping with these situations. I will not ask for any identifiable personal information. I will ask for you to indicate if your agency is rural or urban (a definition is provided on the survey). You will not be asked to give your name or your department's name. I am especially interested in rural officers, because research lacks in this area of policing. Urban officers are encouraged to participate as well, but their data may be used in future pilot research. Attached is a letter from CLEET giving permission to conduct this research. This study has also been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Oklahoma State University to ensure that the rights of all participants are protected.

If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to contact me at 918-277-9217 or at kyle.page@okstate.edu, thank you,

Kyle S. Page

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM



INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title
Stress and Coping among Police Officers in Rural Oklahoma

Investigator
Kyle S. Page, B.A., Community Counseling Graduate Student
Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK

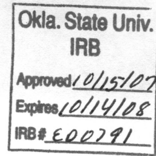
Purpose
This is a pencil and paper based survey research study in which I am looking at the stressful situations and unique coping styles of police officers in the State of Oklahoma. I invite you to participate in this study as part of the completion of my Masters degree in Community Counseling. If you choose to **voluntarily participate**, you will be asked to answer questions about police stress, general stress, your coping styles, from whom you receive support, your satisfaction with life, and knowledge of counseling services available in your area.

Procedures
By completing this voluntary survey, you are consenting to participate in this project. If you decide to participate, please complete the provided survey. If you choose not to participate, you may do so without penalty. At no time will your name or department name be asked. I am especially interested in rural officers, but urban officers are strongly encouraged to participate. Reponses from urban officers will not be used in this current study, but may be used in future pilot research.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a two-paged survey. Please be honest and open on your answers. At no time will your name or department name be collected. Remember, by completing this survey, you are consenting to participate. The amount of time to complete the survey will be between 15 and 20 minutes. Upon completion, please place the survey in the provided white envelope and seal it.

Risks of Participation
The risks associated with this study are minimal. While some of the survey items ask about personal stressful situations, these are no more harmful than those found in ordinary life. As a voluntary participate to this study, you may also choose to not answer any survey item that you perceive as discomforting; you may also stop at anytime without penalty.

Benefits
This research will benefit the psychology and counseling professions in understanding the amount of stress found in the police occupation. Additionally, understanding the sources of support and your styles of coping will benefit the profession. Little research is done on police outside of large, urban cities. It is the aim of this study to investigate these constructs on a rural level. Furthermore, understanding the concerns of Oklahoma police officers may also benefit the officers themselves, in that a body of empirical



research will be collected to strengthen officer concern's and calls for change in their environment.

Confidentiality
NEITHER YOUR NAME NOR YOUR DEPARTMENT NAME WILL BE COLLECTED. PLEASE DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THIS SURVEY.

The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of people who participate in research. Data will be kept for approximately 5 years.

Contacts
If you have questions concerning this project, please contact Kyle S. Page, the primary researcher, at 918-277-9217 or kyle.page@okstate.edu

If you have questions your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Sue Jacobs, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-1676 or irb@okstate.edu

Participant Rights
Your participation in this research is voluntary. You can discontinue the survey at any time without penalty. You may also skip questions that you do not wish to answer.

Consent

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I understand that my participation is voluntary. By completing the survey, I am indicating that I freely and voluntarily agree to participate in this study and I also acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.

This research has been approved by the OSU Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, effective 10/15/07 **until** 10/14/08**.**

Additionally, this research has been verbally approved by Dr. Jeanie Nelson, director of the Council of Law Enforcement Education and Training on July 23, 2007. Written permission from the General Counsel of CLEET has also been obtained.

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX E

OKLAHOMA POLICE SURVEY

OKLAHOMA POLICE SURVEY

PLEASE CHOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

1a ____ I **DO** work in one of the following counties (Canadian, Cleveland, Comanche, Creek, Grady, Le Flore, Lincoln, Logan, McClain, Oklahoma, Okmulgee, Osage, Pawnee, Rogers, Sequoyah, Tulsa, Wagoner)

1b ____ I **DO NOT** work in any of the above named counties.

↳ **If Question 1b is checked**, please select one of the following:

____My Department has 50 or fewer officers ____ My Department has 51 or more officers

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

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

#	Item							
1	Shift work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	Working alone at night	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	Over-time demands	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	Risk of being injured on the job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	Work related activities on days off (e.g. court, community events)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	Traumatic events (e.g. MVA, domestics, death, injury)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	Managing your social life outside of work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	Not enough time available to spend with friends and family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	Paperwork	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	Eating healthy at work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	Finding time to stay in good physical condition	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12	Fatigue (e.g. shift work, over-time)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13	Occupation-related health issues (e.g. back pain)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14	Lack of understanding from family and friends about your work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15	Making friends outside of the job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16	Upholding a "higher image" in public	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17	Negative comments from the public	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18	Limitations to your social life (e.g. who your friends are, where you socialize)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19	Feeling like you are always on the job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20	Friends / family feel the effects of the stigma associated with your job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21	Dealing with co-workers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22	The feeling that different rules apply to different people (e.g. favoritism)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23	Feeling like you always have to prove yourself to the organization	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24	Excessive administrative duties	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25	Constant changes in policy / legislation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26	Staff shortages	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27	Bureaucratic red tape	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28	Too much computer work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29	Lack of training on new equipment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30	Perceived pressure to volunteer free time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31	Dealing with supervisors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32	Inconsistent leadership style	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33	Lack of resources	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34	Unequal sharing of work responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35	If you are sick or injured your co-workers seem to look down on you	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36	Leaders over-emphasize the negatives (e.g. evaluations, complaints)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37	Internal investigations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38	Dealing with the court system	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39	The need to be accountable for doing your job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40	Inadequate equipment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

CONTINUE ON BACK OF THIS PAGE

I am interested in how police officers respond when they confront difficult or stressful events in their lives. There are lots of ways to deal with stress. The following questions ask you to indicate what you generally do and feel, when you experience stressful events related to policing. Obviously, different events bring out different responses, but think about what you usually do when you are under a lot of stress. Circle the appropriate response. Please try to respond to each item separately in your mind from each other item. Make your answer as true FOR YOU as you can. There are no right or wrong answers.

1 = I usually don't do this at all **2 = I usually do this a little bit**
3 = I usually do this a medium amount **4 = I usually do this a lot**

41	I try to grow as a person as a result of the experience	1	2	3	4
42	I get upset and let my emotions out	1	2	3	4
43	I say to myself "this isn't real."	1	2	3	4
44	I restrain myself from doing anything too quickly	1	2	3	4
45	I try to get advice or help from other people about what to do	1	2	3	4
46	I keep myself from getting distracted by other thoughts or activities	1	2	3	4
47	I put my trust in God	1	2	3	4
48	I laugh about the situation	1	2	3	4
49	I discuss my feelings with someone	1	2	3	4
50	I use alcohol or drugs to make myself feel better	1	2	3	4
51	I talk to someone to find out more about the situation	1	2	3	4
52	I get upset and am really aware of it	1	2	3	4
53	I seek God's help	1	2	3	4
54	I make a plan of action	1	2	3	4
55	I hold off doing anything about it until the situation permits	1	2	3	4
56	I refuse to believe that it has happened	1	2	3	4
57	I make jokes about it	1	2	3	4
58	I try to get emotional support from friends or relatives	1	2	3	4
59	I focus on dealing with this problem, and if necessary let other things slide	1	2	3	4
60	I try to lose myself for a while by drinking alcohol or taking drugs	1	2	3	4
61	I let my feelings out	1	2	3	4
62	I try to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive	1	2	3	4
63	I talk to someone who could do something concrete about the problem	1	2	3	4
64	I try to come up with a strategy about what to do	1	2	3	4
65	I get sympathy and understanding from someone	1	2	3	4
66	I drink alcohol or take drugs, in order to think about it less	1	2	3	4
67	I kid around about it	1	2	3	4
68	I look for something good in what is happening	1	2	3	4
69	I think about how I might best handle the problem	1	2	3	4
70	I ask people who have had similar experiences what they did	1	2	3	4
71	I pretend that it hasn't really happened	1	2	3	4
72	I make sure not to make matters worse by acting too soon	1	2	3	4
73	I try hard to prevent other things from interfering with my efforts at dealing with this	1	2	3	4
74	I try to find comfort in my religion	1	2	3	4
75	I make fun of the situation	1	2	3	4
76	I talk to someone about how I feel	1	2	3	4
77	I use alcohol or drugs to help me get through it	1	2	3	4
78	I think hard about what steps to take	1	2	3	4
79	I put aside other activities in order to concentrate on this	1	2	3	4
80	I force myself to wait for the right time to do something	1	2	3	4
81	I act as though it hasn't even happened	1	2	3	4
82	I learn something from the experience	1	2	3	4
83	I pray more than usual	1	2	3	4
84	I feel a lot of emotional distress and I find myself expressing those feelings a lot.	1	2	3	4

CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE

The questions in this section ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the **last month**. In each, you will be asked to indicate ***how often*** you felt or thought a certain way. Although some questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer each question fairly quickly. This is, don't try to count up the number of times you felt a particular way, but rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate. For each question choose from the following alternatives:

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
0	1	2	3	4

IN THE LAST MONTH HOW OFTEN……

85	have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	0	1	2	3	4
86	have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
87	have you felt nervous or "stressed"?	0	1	2	3	4
88	have you dealt successfully with irritating life hassles?	0	1	2	3	4
89	have you felt that you were effectively coping with important changes that were occurring in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
90	have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	0	1	2	3	4
91	have you felt that things were going your way?	0	1	2	3	4
92	have you found that you could not cope with all the things you had to do?	0	1	2	3	4
93	have you been able to control irritations in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
94	have you felt you were on top of things?	0	1	2	3	4
95	have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control?	0	1	2	3	4
96	have you found yourself thinking about things that you have to accomplish?	0	1	2	3	4
97	have you been able to control how you spend your time?	0	1	2	3	4
98	have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not over come them?	0	1	2	3	4

Read each statement carefully. Indicate how you feel about each of the following statements, using the following scale:

1 = Very Strongly Disagree 2 = Strongly Disagree 3 = Mildly Disagree 4 = Neutral
5 = Mildly Agree 6 = Strongly Agree 7 = Very Strongly Agree

99	There is a special person who is around when I am in need	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
100	There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
101	My family really tries to help me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
102	I get the emotional help and support I need from my family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
103	I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
104	My friends really try to help me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
105	I can count on my friends when things go wrong	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
106	I can talk about my problems with my family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
107	I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
108	There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
109	My family is willing to help me make decisions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
110	I can talk about my problems with my friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

YOU ARE ALMOST DONE! FLIP PAGE TO FINISH

Read each statement below. Indicate your agreement with each using the following choices

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Slightly Disagree 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
5 = Slightly Agree 6 = Agree 7 = Strongly Agree

111	In most ways my life is close to my ideal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
112	The conditions of my life are excellent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
113	I am satisfied with my life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
114	So far I have gotten the important things I want in life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
115	If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Knowledge of Resources

116	My department has a full time counselor/therapist/psychologist	YES	NO	UNSURE
117	My department has a part-time counselor/therapist/psychologist	YES	NO	UNSURE
118	My job benefits include an Employee Assistance Program with counseling	YES	NO	UNSURE
119	I could go to a community mental health center if I needed to	YES	NO	UNSURE
120	My department has a Chaplain I could talk with if I needed to	YES	NO	UNSURE
121	I would like to see more counseling services available in my area	YES	NO	
122	I would prefer to talk with a fellow officer rather than a therapist	YES	NO	

Demographic Questions

Age: ________ Male _____ Female ______

Total years in police field: ____ 0 - 5 ____ 6 - 10 ____ 11 - 15 ____ 16 - 20 ____ 20+

I currently work for (please check one of the following types of agency):
____County ____City/Town ____State _____Tribal ______Prefer not to answer

Are you Spanish/Hispanic/Latino? (please circle)

1. No
2. Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
3. Yes, Puerto Rican
4. Yes, Cuban
5. Yes, Other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino

What is your race? (please circle one or more races)

1. White
2. Black
3. Asian Indian
4. Chinese
5. Filipino
6. Japanese
7. Korean
8. Vietnamese
9. Native Hawaiian
10. Guamanian
11. Samoan
12. Other
13. American Indian/Alaskan Native

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

PAGE 4/4

VITA

Kyle Scott Page

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: STRESS AND COPING AMONG POLICE OFFICERS IN RURAL OKLAHOMA

Major Field: Community Counseling

Biographical:

Personal data: Kyle Scott Page is from Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. He is the son of Larry and Beth Page.

Education: Kyle graduated from Union High School in Tulsa, Oklahoma in May, 2002. Kyle attended the University of Tulsa and received his Bachelor of Art degree in Psychology and German in May, 2006. Kyle completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Community Counseling at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 2008.

Professional Memberships: American Counseling Association and Association for Adult Development and Aging

Name: Kyle Scott Page | Date of Degree: July, 2008

Institution: Oklahoma State University | Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: STRESS AND COPING AMONG POLICE OFFICERS IN RURAL OKLAHOMA

Pages in Study: 95 | Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science

Major Field: Community Counseling

Scope and Method of Study:

Rural law enforcement personnel are often neglected in police research. In this study, rural police stress and coping techniques among rural law enforcement were investigated. Participants ($N = 85$), from nonmetropolitan locations, completed measures pertaining to police-related stress, perceived stress, coping styles, satisfaction with life, and sources of social support. They also completed questions regarding counseling resources available.

Findings and Conclusions:

Social support was negatively correlated with perceived stress and stressful operational aspects of policing, but not organizational police stress. The relationship between the source of social support and organizational stress differed between officers from smaller and larger rural departments. Officers used various styles of coping to handle different kinds of stress. When questioned about their knowledge of counseling resources, a majority of rural officers preferred to speak to a fellow officer rather than to a therapist. Guidelines for implementation of rural services are suggested.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Sue C. Jacobs