

**Stress and Culture in Police Work:
An Ethnographic Study of Canadian Police Officers**

by

David B. MacDonald

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in Criminology**

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For Sheena,
You are my ship...

Abstract

Stress and Culture in Police Work: An Ethnographic Study of Canadian Police Officers

To date, investigations of police stress and coping have been primarily addressed in psychological research. Largely due to individualistic methodology, little consideration has been given to the effect of work culture on coping with stressful events and situations in police work. In this thesis, I examined the viability of a 'cultural coping' approach, one that recognized the role of the occupational group in addressing stress and difficulty. I also examined prominent stressors of patrol officers. This analysis relied on ethnographic research of patrol officers in a mid-sized Canadian police department. Twenty field observation sessions involved police patrol ridealongs, after-work social gatherings and events. Patrol officers also participated in twenty-three structured interviews and sixty-four informal conversations and discussions. In total, contact was made with one fourth of all patrol officers in the department. I argue police culture provides a positive and palliative resource for coping with stress in police work and continues to direct the social action of police officers. 'Surveillance stress' is identified as an emerging concern in police work. I also argue that an ethnographic perspective is ideal for studying stress and coping.

David B. MacDonald
October 31, 2005

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Chapter One: Introduction

The 'police officer' fulfills many functions in society, including law enforcement, order maintenance and criminal investigation. Police officers respond to situations fraught with harm, danger and death which can have a lasting impact on their social and personal life. In fulfilling their duties, police officers are regularly exposed to stressful incidents that make them distinct from everyday citizens. Coping with stress is therefore crucial for police officers who must manage extraordinary and routine situations encountered in their occupation.

Stress research evolved during the Second World War and it further developed with military sponsorship in the post-war period. Not surprisingly, the main impetus for stress research was to develop improved soldier selection and placement (Newton, et al., 1995; Lazarus, 1999). Researchers found emotional conditions in soldiers that were related to combat experience, which are now referred to as "battle fatigue, war neurosis and post-traumatic stress" (Lazarus, 1999: 28). Eventually, it was discovered that most workers during the war experienced stress and this research agenda was extended to everyday occupations (Lazarus, 1999).

The post-war industrialization of the 1950s and 1960s brought more work related stress issues to the surface, and this generated significant attention among unions, employers, governments and academics. These concerns led to research that identified 'stress problems' in the working environment: industrial efficiency and productivity, worker turn-over and well-being and longevity among workers to name a few (Newton, 1995). These studies focused on Taylorist 'work reform' and developed laboratory research to identify and remedy workplace stress (ibid).

Coping studies followed early stress research, but lacked any substantial theoretical background until the 1970s and 1980s. Coping theory developed from the concept of 'ego defence' in psychoanalytic theory (Lazarus, 1999: 103). Managing stress was initially thought to be influenced by an individual's traits, but later theories associated coping with a broader process of change -- a person makes cognitive (internal) and environmental (external) adjustments to cope with stress (Lazarus, 1999). These theories of coping dominate the research, with a few recent alternative explanations (Lazarus, 1999).

Stress research was applied increasingly to public service contexts, including policing (i.e., Neiderhoffer, 1969; Kroes, 1984; 1988; Violanti, 1983; Violanti and Marshall, 1983; Golembiewski and Kim, 1990). Much of this research has focused on 'individualistic' psychological explanations of managing stress (see Violanti and Marshall, 1983; Cannizzo and Liu, 1995; Evans, Coman et al., 1993; Alexander and Walker, 1994; Biggam, Power, MacDonald, 1997; Brown, Fielding, Grover, 1999; Leonard and Alison, 1999). In this thesis, I investigate stress and coping in police work from a sociological perspective. This approach recognizes the importance of social relations, bonds and norms when responding to stress. As a result, coping with stress becomes a collective endeavor that is created and supported from within a social group. Coping is therefore a social phenomenon ameliorated through group interaction and police occupational cultural values. Thus, my approach studies the police officer's work environment through ethnographic observations and interviews and by using criminological and sociological theory as a framework for investigation.

This research project makes an important contribution to sociological and criminological inquiry. To start, the existing police occupational cultural research documents a different era of policing (see Banton, 1964; Neiderhoffer, 1969; Westley,

1970; Rubenstein, 1973; Ericson, 1982; Skolnick, 1993; Manning, 1997). Many police case studies were conducted circa 1960-1980 and have yet to be replicated.

Furthermore, studies of police occupational cultural coping have been few and far between, even within the policing occupation. My research will attempt to rejuvenate and revise police theory by studying police occupational culture at the street-level and by documenting the current conditions experienced by police constables.

Second, since 1982, the criminological research that followed early police cultural ethnographies has focused on the institutional aspect of policing organizations (see Dandeker, 1990; Lyon, 1993; Bogard, 1996; Ericson and Haggerty, 1997; 2000; Goold, 2002). These studies have emphasized the role of the larger police organization into supporting functions of risk management, surveillance and governmentality. Unfortunately, institutionally oriented analyses of police activity have de-emphasized the influence of police culture as an important social determinant of police action and stress coping (Ericson and Haggerty, 1997: 11, 31-3). As a result, I will conduct a micro-level analysis of policing and evaluate whether occupational culture is still an important part of social action.

Third, there are few Canadian ethnographic studies of police cultural activity in academic research (see Banton, 1964; Westley, 1970; Ericson, 1981; 1982; Vincent, 1990). The majority of police occupational cultural studies feature American, British and Australian police officers (see Brewer, 1990; Manning, 1997, Chan, 1997). Thus, my study will fill the void in research and provide a recent Canadian perspective that accentuates mores, attitudes and activities from police in the Atlantic region.

Finally, many previous studies of police stress and coping have failed to use qualitative and ethnographic methodologies. In the cases when stress research does include qualitative data (interviews and observational research), it only serves to

supplement quantitative findings. A study that utilizes qualitative ethnographic research methods permits a more detailed analysis of the socio-cultural interaction in stress management. For example, the role of 'stories' and 'discourse' in coping which may be overlooked in a strictly quantitative study, can be captured by ethnographic investigations.

Ethnographic research may help establish an alternative way of thinking about stress and coping because it studies from a cultural analysis standpoint that valorizes as a mediating process. My research recognizes the "participant's stories" as they relate their feelings and emotions of their occupation (see Barker, 1999; Toch, 2002). Thus, my project avoids a one-time survey methodology in favour of continual observation of the participant's working environment. It is ideally suited to examine stress and coping in policing.

This research has several limitations. First, this thesis is limited in context. Because my research focuses on line officers, little reference to institutional measures will be made. I do not review the 'official' organizational stance on stress and coping or evaluate organizational policy and operations. My investigation relies solely on the impressions of stress management within rank and file policing. Although a significant amount of stress research has focused on appraisal and improvement of organizational policy and operations, I do not attempt an analysis of the higher echelons of the organization or claim that my study is holistic.

Second, this study is limited by the short time-frame of the observation. I accompanied police officers for approximately three months. An ethnographic study of greater length would have surely allowed me to document how coping measures changed over time. However, during the three months, I conducted an intensive schedule of field observations and was able to accompany and interview a significant

number of police constables in the department. I was a 'recognizable' face and I obtained an unobstructed view of how coping functions among many constables. My ethnography, is best approached as a snapshot of police stress and coping responses.

Finally, my limited and temporary field experience meant that I would not often witness fatal accidents, police shootings and violent crime directly (see also Brown et al., 1999). As a result, I relied on semi-structured interviews to supplement this shortfall in observational data. But I want to emphasize that without the rapport developed by participant observation, it would have been difficult to interview police officers about such sensitive issues. By allowing officers to get to know me, I became privy to information usually guarded from outsiders.

This thesis is organized as follows: chapter two reviews and critiques existing psychological literatures on the topic and makes the case for a cultural analysis of stress and coping; chapter three describes the methodology, ethics, sampling and the process of conducting the ethnography; chapter four presents findings on the stressors identified by police officers during the ethnography and interviews and discusses the most prominent stressors in context; chapter five presents findings on the cultural coping methods that officers use to manage stress in police work and analyses how culture is involved in stress relief. Finally, chapter six summarizes my findings and draws out the implications of my research on policing, stress and cultural coping.

In the next chapter, I discuss past and current approaches that study stress and coping. I also establish my argument that both stress and coping should be considered from a perspective that recognizes the role of police occupational culture in stress management.

Chapter Two: Stress, Police Work and Cultural Analysis

This chapter identifies stress and coping as objects of investigation in police work. It outlines the psychological position on the issues and evaluates strengths and limitations in the existing literature. I argue that a sociological approach is needed to bridge the theoretical gap in current research and I emphasize the importance of a cultural analysis for studying the stress coping process. Finally, I review the current police cultural literature and identify the elements that are most influential in my study of stress and coping.

Stress, Police Work and Psychology

When reviewing the literature on stress and coping in police work, we see that the majority of academic studies highlight a psychological framework that in turn, sets the definitions, types, causes, coping measures, effects and responses (Evans, Coman et al., 1993; Alexander and Walker, 1994; Biggam, Power, MacDonald, 1997; Patterson, 2000). These studies have established the central concepts of the phenomenon and identified research agendas. Stress is often defined as a “self-perceived imbalance between the demand and the resources available to deal with a situation” (Biggam, Power, MacDonald, 1997:109). Stress coping is “an individual’s constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific internal or external demands and resources” (Evans, Coman et al., 1993: 237).

Psychological research also defines operational definitions of stress. According to Brown et al. (1999: 322), stress can appear in various forms, including: “traumatic, vicarious and routine.” Traumatic stress is experienced when an individual experiences

conditions of death, injury or events that are highly emotional in nature (i.e. a sudden infant death). Vicarious stress is a condition arising from the knowledge that another person is experiencing a traumatic situation and needs help. Routine stress is found in the difficulties of everyday life, such as interpersonal conflict, management, financial duress and many other daily troubles. So, stress can arise from direct exposure to stressful incidents, everyday stress and observing the difficulties of others (Brown, Fielding, Grover, 1999).

Evans, Coman et al. (1993) defined elements of stress coping behavior. Coping “resources” were the individual’s means to cope, whether social, psychological or physical. Coping “styles” were “patterns of coping behaviors displayed in the person and environment” (ibid.). Coping “strategies” were the “transactions of coping resources, beliefs and values [used in a] conscious attempt to reduce stress” (ibid.). They were the actual techniques: “direct action, inhibition, information seeking and turning to others” used by people to manage stress (Evans, Coman, et al., 1993: 238).

As a result, one can identify two major elements of a “stress situation”: stress and coping. In other words, when faced with stress, a person can adopt a coping method according to their personal and social surroundings and their available resources.

Stress, Coping and Police Work

Since the 1980s, countless psychological studies have examined stress in the police occupational environment. Early studies uncovered the emerging stress problem in police work and focused on defining stressors that affected police officers (see Violanti, 1983; Violanti and Marshall, 1983; Violanti et al., 1985; Anson and Bloom, 1988; Golembiewski and Kim, 1990; Crank and Caldero, 1991; Coman and Evans,

1991). For example, stressors such as violence, trauma, threats, deaths, danger, disasters, shift work, court testimony were identified. These studies led to an examination of coping behavior, which often appraised the actions of police officers and their organizations. Interestingly, the self-report questionnaire methodology of early psychological studies continues to be used to present day. Overall, it was recognized that the police occupation deserved specific study because of noticeable levels and trends of burnout, cynicism, suicide and divorce (Violanti and Marshall, 1983; Golembiewski and Kim, 1990).

A number of significant findings were discovered and confirmed by later studies on stress. In earlier research, a curvilinear relationship was found between experience and stress (Violanti 1983; Patterson, 1992). Researchers found that when comparing stress response rates from police officers with a range of experiences (from rookie to senior with 25 years), younger and older officers had lower stress levels. Those with ten to twelve years experience reported the most stress, which was displayed by disillusionment, frustration and cynicism (Violanti, 1983). The researchers attributed the curvilinear relationship to the naivety of newer recruits who did not realize the frustrations ahead and the resignation of senior officers who acknowledged that their retirement was in sight (Violanti, 1983; Patterson, 1992).

In addition, research on similar law enforcement occupations found that line police officers experienced the most stress when compared to parole and correctional officers (Patterson, 1992). However, whether police officers experience more stress than other “people processing occupations” (such as teachers, firefighters and paramedics) is unclear. Some research has reported that police are troubled more significantly by stress (Sigler et al., 1988; 1991) and other studies have found that stress was experienced similarly among related occupations (Anson and Bloom, 1988).

Furthermore, research has found that routine stressors are significantly more troubling than danger and life threats (Patterson, 1999). Paperwork ranked higher than critical incidents and dangerous situations as stressors among police officers (Crank and Caldero, 1991; Patterson, 1999). This finding changed conceptions about what is typically thought as stressful, such as shootings, vehicle chases and domestic disputes. Indeed, non-traumatic stressors, such as disagreements with supervisors, lack of proper equipment and other organizational problems appear to be more problematic (ibid). This suggests that improvement in the communication, supervision and organization of police departments has an effect on workers, and proper functioning is critical to the well-being of police officers.

The effects of stress on police officers has been exhaustively documented, most frequently in studies of 'burnout', negativity, psychosomatic disorders and alcohol use (Violanti et al., 1985; Golembiewski and Kim, 1990; Cannizzo and Liu, 1995; Vulcano, et al., 1984; Davey et al., 2001). As an example, police officers have displayed 'negative stress outcomes' from job stress, such as marital problems, suicide and physical debilitation (Golembiewski and Kim, 1990). Police officers also regularly reported a greater frequency of psychosomatic disorders (stomach aches, ulcers, asthma, indigestion, high blood pressure, etc.) than other population groups (Vulcano et al., 1984). Burnout, "characterized by feelings of cynicism towards one's clients", is thought to be more prevalent among service occupations who frequently experience "adverse conditions and stressful events" (Cannizzo and Liu, 1995: 53). These conditions restricted an officer's ability to respond to a situation within the normal range of emotions and so "depersonalization" results, as work and personal life are evaluated negatively (ibid.). Burnout studies focused on identifying suspected life and work

experiences that affect police officers and emergency personnel (Cannizzo and Liu, 1995).

The topic of coping among police officers has been relatively unexplored when compared to the multitude of studies that document stressors, burnout and their physical effect. However, a few important findings have garnered significant attention. Most noteworthy has been the confirmation of two main types of coping among police officers (Evans, et al., 1993; Alexander and Walker, 1994; Biggam, Power, MacDonald, 1997; Patterson, 1999; 2000). Problem focused coping can be described as time management, goal setting, information gathering and other 'direct action' responses to stress (Biggam, Power, MacDonald, 1997; Patterson, 1999; 2000). Problem focused coping was found to be most effective by police officers (ibid). The reliance on problem-focused coping among police was attributed to training and socialization characteristics of the police culture (Biggam, Power, MacDonald, 1997).

Another method, emotion-focused coping, included "cognitive restructuring, minimization, 'looking at the bright side of things', talking about things", but these were used to a lesser extent (Evans, et al., 1993; Alexander and Walker, 1994; Biggam, Power, MacDonald, 1997; Patterson, 1999; 2000). This was consistent with police practices of emotion avoidance with stressful situations (Pogrebin and Poole, 1991). However, emotion focused strategies had greater possibility of use among officers with higher education and rank (Patterson, 2000).

Strengths and Limitations of the Psychological Approach

Before embarking on a critique of this research it's important to recognize the strengths of the psychological approach. First, this framework has identified and defined the stress problem among police officers. Researchers reported various

stressors, whether generated by conditions of the occupational environment, the departmental structure and operation or workplace conflict or other means. Second, their initial conceptual work on understanding the stress phenomena enabled categorization and appraisal of coping methods. These findings have been used to improve police coping measures and encouraged police departments to ameliorate worker well-being through use of critical incident stress debriefings. Finally, because of the relative ease in using and processing self-report surveys (the most frequently used data collection methodology), psychological research has built an impressive inventory of data on stress and coping. Results allow estimates of occupational parameters, enabling an accurate understanding of the extent and nature of stress phenomena. The survey methodology has enabled researchers to conduct extensive comparisons of occupations and organizations and also determine the level of stressors in these contexts.

Hidden among the strengths of existing research on stress, however, were some limitations. First and most significant, studies on police have for the most part neglected occupational cultural influences in the stress and coping process. While many studies mention police culture – few used it to examine its effects on police coping (see Violanti, 1983; Violanti and Marshall, 1983; Violanti et al., 1985; Golembiewski and Kim, 1990; Patterson, 1991; Evans, et al., 1993; Alexander and Walker, 1994; Cannizzo and Liu, 1995; Biggam, MacDonald, Power, 1997; Brown, et al., 1999; Leonard and Allison, 1999; Patterson, 2000). Police occupational culture was often included as an after-thought and catch-all description of ‘social support’ and ‘peer culture’ coping (Brown et al, 1999; Leonard and Allison, 1999). Studies used sociological and police cultural terminology, such as socialization, machismo or alcohol culture, but they did not go beyond using these terms to offer a detailed explanation (see Brown et al., 1999; Davey

et al., 2001). Some researchers have also recognized the need to investigate occupational cultural influences in stress management, but this was a minor aspect of the current research on stress (Stotland, 1991; Patterson, 2000). Clearly, studying how the police occupational culture enables police officers to cope will add to an area of research that has been woefully neglected.

Second, the existing research on police stress and coping has relied heavily on positivist quantitative survey and self-report studies, without significant consideration for qualitative input from police officers. In a few cases, open-ended questions amplified the quantitative data from surveys – but this was rare (see Brown, et al., 1994). So the voice of the subject was muted. Interpretive qualitative approaches, however, allow significant involvement with participants and recognize their contributions. Interpretive ethnographic research is multifaceted, using field observations and interviews on a regular basis within the police environment. As stated by Berg, “the important point about the concept of ethnography...is that the practice places researchers in the midst of whatever it is they study” (2000: 134). Thus, the researcher is able to develop relationships with their research subjects, enabling involvement with participants and better knowledge of the emotive nature of stress and coping behaviors.

Third, there were few published studies of stress and policing in Canada (see Vincent, 1990). As with police cultural studies, the majority of stress and coping research has been conducted with British, American and Australian police forces. Further research was necessary to document the coping strategies of Canadian workers, as well as comparative studies to assess whether coping strategies differed with other cultures and nationalities. There was also a need for study of smaller municipalities and rural-area police departments (Crank and Caldero, 1991), which were wholly neglected in existing research.

Fourth, a significant focus has been given to negative or maladaptive coping and stress outcomes by police officers. Research has described negative coping strategies: alcohol use (Violanti et al., 1985; Davey, et al., 2001), cynicism and depersonalization (Violanti, 1983; Violanti and Marshall; 1983), burnout and strain (Golembiewski and Kim, 1990; Cannizzo and Liu, 1995; Barker, 1999), post-traumatic stress disorder (Leonard and Allison, 1999) and physical ailments (Vulcano et al., 1984). In these studies, the positive coping methods of storytelling, humor, exercise, recipe rules, peer and social support remained relatively unexplored. Despite the need to identify the problems of police coping, it was important to describe the positive and palliative strategies used by police officers, and qualitative methods were well suited to uncover these strategies.

Finally, the existing research was cross-sectional and does not examine stress over an extended period of time. Predominantly based on 'one-shot' surveys, very few studies have used long term field work to document stress and coping (Violanti, 1983; Patterson, 1991). My project draws data from three months of field work and significantly departs from the survey method with in-depth interview and observational methods. In addition, my research provides further insight into police stress from extended involvement in the police field which supports the need acknowledged by other researchers (Patterson, 1991).

Culture, Policing and Stress Coping

In an attempt to address the limitations of current research, I used an alternative framework that recognized the importance of work culture. Cultural analysis investigates how meaning -- the substance of culture -- is constructed in our social lives. Cultural *meaning* directs our interaction and relationships with others and shapes the world we inhabit (Wuthanow et al., 1984). Cultural analysis has four main frameworks:

interactionist, critical, post-structuralist and anthropological. Each framework has differing perspectives on society and social life. For instance, critical analysis adopts a perspective cognizant of the influences of economy and cultural “superstructures” that attempt to take control of social life. Social actors are thus controlled or “dominated” by these forces whether supported by ideology or conflict. Critical cultural analysis seeks to unveil these controlling aspects of society (Ritzer, 1996: 150).

Anthropological analyses typically studies culture from a micro-level approach. Cultural-anthropological theories analyse routine rules, rituals, symbols and minute aspects of social life and culture. Indeed, some theorists prioritize “artifacts” to define their explanations of social culture (Wuthanow et al., 1984: 84). For example, Douglas developed an analysis of ‘dirt’ and pollution to understand how we organize social life (Wuthanow et al., 1984). In her analysis, Douglas links how we perceive ‘dirty’ things to our perception of a personal moral order and how this creates societal rules in our own lives.

Post-structuralist theory views society from a broad, macro-level perspective. Simply put, they deconstruct everyday meanings and social reality to reveal the overlooked aspects of our society (e.g. the traps of ‘new, efficient and innovative’ technology). Post-structuralist analyses describe the relationships between power and knowledge and deconstructs the ‘history’ of how they have affected social reality. This was exemplified in Foucault’s (1977) historical work on punishment and the prison. His work has influenced theories on discipline and surveillance, including the integral components of modern day policing.

While I acknowledged the importance of these three frameworks, I used the interactionist approach for my analysis of police work. Interactionist theory argues that the social world is constituted by socially constructed meaning. Meaning forms what we

know as culture, including: "ideology, belief systems, moral codes and institutions" (Wuthanow et al., 1984: 25). Meanings are shared collectively in "typifications and a common stock of knowledge" and this, in turn, informs individual action, behavior and social interaction (Wuthanow et al, 1984: 30). When studying culture, interactionists construct 'ideal types' from meaning to explain the functioning of everyday life. This perspective recognizes the values, opinions and meanings of others in the social world. Interpretive cultural analysis is about making sense of experience. As Wuthanow (1984: 24) puts it:

The common-sense knowledge of everyday life, the ways in which people organize their daily experience and especially those of the social world, is the background within which inquiry must begin.

The Value of Cultural Analysis

A cultural framework is warranted when studying stress, coping and policing. First, policing was influenced by the occupational cultural milieu of police officers (Skolnick, 1994; Manning, 1997). The police culture and its assumptions, characteristics, personality and knowledge influence social action on the street and direct the behavior and interaction of police officers (Van Maanen, 1978; Ericson, 1982; Brewer, 1990; Skolnick, 1994; Manning, 1997; Chan, 1997). Occupational culture was constructed by police officers during their daily activities and shared as a working knowledge (Shearing and Ericson, 1991; Chan, 1997). Cultural analysis recognizes the connection between culture and action and is a useful approach to reveal how occupational culture helps manage stress.

Second, my culture-based methodology (ethnography) was 'interpretive' and an alternative to positivistic, measurements and conclusions (i.e. if it can't be directly observed, it is highly in doubt). Interpretive ethnography recognized the values,

feelings and emotions associated with an event – a perspective that was important when relating stress experiences. Previous studies used positivistic methods that were less sensitive to participant's contributions. In cultural analysis, participants have a genuine opportunity for involvement and this allowed for subjectivity, including the “inner thoughts, feelings and perceptions of culture producing actors” to be considered in analyses (Wuthanow et al. 1984: 241). So, this project was not 'detached' from the perspectives of participants. Instead by using interview and observational data, I allowed the participants to speak more openly for themselves.

Third, cultural analysis offered more avenues for investigation. Cultural analysis is diverse when theorizing about social action and behavior. For example, in policing, cultural analysis has reviewed social interaction between police officers at the level of the individual and the social group (see Pogrebin and Poole, 1988; Manning, 1997). Other studies showed broader societal influences on police culture such as institutional risk management and information requests (see Ericson and Haggerty, 1997). My study adopted a micro-level investigation of these issues. For instance, I examined the effect institutional influences (i.e. surveillance) have on policing and how they affected the stress and coping of police officers.

Finally, cultural analysis can inform stress and coping researchers from within the psychological tradition. Indeed some of these researchers have recognized that existing studies have neglected consideration for culture. They argued that further research should examine its role in stress management. Cultural analysis would provide further depth to a topic that has been studied exhaustively from psychological and positivist foundations (Stotland, 1991; Brown et al., 1994; Patterson, 2000).

Workplace Cultural Analysis

Work culture has been studied in a variety of ethnographic settings. Earlier Chicago School of Sociology studies of taxi-hall dancers, jazz musicians, hobos, youth criminals, hospital workers and janitors laid the foundations for later studies of the workplace, including the police. Field work was used to analyze several aspects of the workplace, including “structural, social-psychological and ideological” elements of occupations (Berger, 1964:227). According to Berger, human work can be analysed in macrosocial and microsocial contexts. The macrosocial is a collection of small groups of work communities or what he terms, “microsocial worlds”. Berger argued that “miniature world[s] [are] created by those who work together ... within the circumstances of their work” (Berger, 1964: 228). Occupations form the identity of individuals and social status is defined by “what we do” (Wrenn, 1964; Gross, 1964). The microsocial maintained the status and relationships of the occupational group and contained a particular “ethos and ethics” including a common collection of thought, mores, perceptions, habits and characteristics of a particular occupation or workplace (ibid: 229). This, in turn, brought together those that hold similar work identities, acted to “unite the fellows” and created associations that bonded a group of people together into a larger occupational unit (Gross, 1964: 67).

Several elements organized my analysis of work culture (one should think of them as interrelated and collective). The elements were: *signs and symbols*, *values*, *communication*, *interaction* and *lore (working knowledge)*. *Signs and symbols* were the representations or meanings that defined the worker’s internal social world. *Values* were the ideologies and beliefs that influenced behavior. *Communication* was the the art of creating and spreading knowledge. *Interaction* was the modes of social interplay

with other people. Finally, *lore* (*working knowledge*) was the culturally ingrained expertise that was exchanged between workers (Shearing and Ericson, 1991; Chan, 1997).

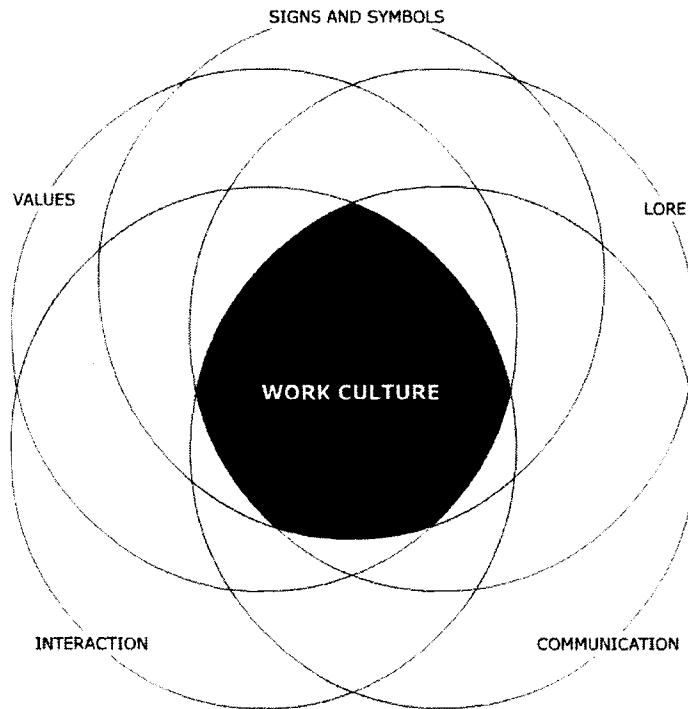


Diagram 1. Elements of Work Culture Analysis

These elements of occupational culture (mapped in diagram 1) interacted together to form work culture. Each element should be thought of separately, but when combined they formed a detailed understanding of culture. The relationship between these elements was dynamic and allowed for variation among work cultures and individuals. In some work cultures certain elements may hold more significance and worth, outweighing others. Compare work cultures in policing and janitor work, for instance. In police work, solidarity held a strong significance among police officers and accordingly influenced their occupational culture by promoting a collective environment rather than an individualistic one (Skolnick, 1994; Reiner, 2000). However, janitor work was highly individualistic and solidarity was less important as a neighbourhood rivalry

among janitors created a sense of self-preservation. Signs and symbols (typifications) may have taken higher precedent over solidarity among janitors. Janitors focused on classifying tenants, supervisors and other janitors rather than bonding together (Gold in Berger, 1964: 1-49). The significance of cultural elements was therefore job specific and as seen above, police officers belonged to a group culture that focused on group cohesion, whereas janitors, for example, focused on competition and rivalry. However, the characteristics of workplace cultural elements remained crucial to each occupational culture.

Each component contributed to culture and they overlapped and influenced each other (i.e, signs and symbols can be used in lore). However, my conception of occupational culture did not place more emphasis on any one individual component. Each element in the diagram was fluid, rather than an exact measurement and the reader should appreciate the contingency of culture. By proposing this conception of occupational culture, I wanted to organize the cultural themes that comprised the police officer's social environment and organized police cultural elements which informed my analysis of stress and coping (see Chapter 5).

What is Police Culture?

From recruitment to training to job placement, police officers were socialized into a culture that defined their occupation, social role, behavior and interaction with colleagues and citizens (see Ericson, 1982; Vincent, 1990; Shearing and Ericson, 1991; Skolnick, 1994; Manning, 1997). The police occupational culture directed the action of police officers (Shearing and Ericson, 1991, Manning, 1997) and was a "palliative" entity, providing relief when officers are confronted with problems (Waddington, 1999). As a result, many studies have characterized some elements unique to this cultural

milieu. But, few studies have organized and made sense of the variety of cultural elements that encompass police work in general (see Crank, 1997; Reiner, 2000). The most notable effort was the 'reconceptualization' of police culture by Janet Chan (1997). Chan attributed occupational culture to three interactive concepts: "knowledge", "construction" and "relations" (Chan, 1997: 68-70). For her, occupational cultural elements were held as 'knowledge' among police officers and helped direct police action. Chan identified and defined four elements of knowledge, namely the "axiomatic, dictionary, recipe and directory" (Chan, 1997: 76-80).

First, *axiomatic* knowledge was defined as the police mission or mandate that provides an ideological foundation for police officers. This was embedded in the understanding that police were "heroic" "crook-catchers" who fought a "war against crime, maintaining order and protecting people's lives and property" (Chan, 1997: 76). The mandate also generated frustration in officers, as everyday police work was far away from this idealistic notion.

Second, informational categories that police developed and used were structured into *dictionary* knowledge. Police officers classified citizens into groups to define how they will interact with them. As an example, police found several levels of "abnormality" in people, "individuals out of place, individuals in particular places, individuals of particular types regardless of place" (Ericson, 1982 in Chan, 1997:77).

Third, Chan defined *directory* knowledge as the methods of police work or the ways that they go about doing their jobs. Police developed a sense of suspiciousness, an iconography of potential danger, and an understanding of using reasonable force in their early career. Officers used this developed knowledge to direct how they conducted their work.

Finally, Chan (1997: 79) argued that *recipe* knowledge was that which provides “recommendations and strategies”, helping officers cope with police work. Recipe knowledge was the internal police sentiment about how everyday situations were to be conducted and managed. According to Chan (1997: 80), officers developed methods of dealing with the work environment, chastising “gung-ho” officers, “covering ass” or protecting others through the “code of silence”.

Occupational culture was constructed, supported and sustained particular forms of knowledge. Furthermore, police culture was dependent on relationships within the political and economic structures of broader society. Police culture must manage how society reacts to their job, whether by adapting their behavior or reassessing their values and beliefs toward the public (Chan, 1997). The adoption of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in Canada was an example of this type of change. Officers were required to change various aspects of how they did their job, including their treatment of suspects, detention and legal counsel rights.

Chan’s work was useful because it succeeded in developing a theoretical foundation that conceptualized individual elements of police culture (such as mandate, suspicion, categorization, recipe knowledge) within a larger framework. Her ‘re-conceptualization’ of existing theories reorganized the field with an integrated interpretation of police culture. However, Chan’s reassembly had limitations in its applicability. By focusing on ‘knowledge’, she omitted elements related to social action, including authority, humor, machismo and group solidarity. This was surprising as these elements of culture have been reported significantly in past research (Pogrebin and Poole, 1988; 1991; Heidensohn, 1994; Skolnick, 1994; Fielding, 1995; Young, 1995; Mitchell, 1996). As I will show in later chapters, these elements were crucial when coping with stress in police work.

Chan's work also neglected the current social surveillance and risk management patterns now ingrained in police work (Ericson and Haggerty, 1997; Haggerty and Ericson, 2000; Goold, 2002). This limitation overlooks a significant influence that shaped contemporary policing with varying degrees of risk and information gathering, which have had an considerable effect on police culture. As a result, Chan overlooked an important cultural response from workers who reacted to the pressures from increased surveillance and risk management at work. I will add to Chan's analysis by demonstrating how surveillance and risk have created a significant "resistance" in police. This resistance formed part of the 'lore' element of work culture, seen as 'recipe resistance' (See Chapter 5).

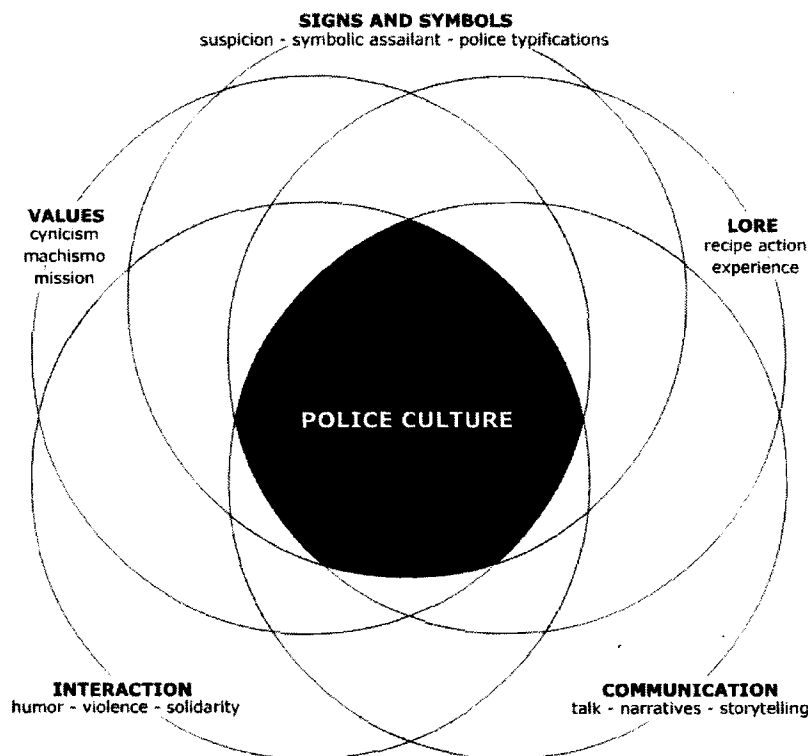


Diagram 2. Elements of Police Culture Analysis

In seeking to simplify the information on police culture and expand upon Chan's (1997) work, I have organized the themes of police culture within the broader

components of work culture as introduced earlier in Diagram one. Thus the signs and symbols of work culture involved suspicion, symbolic assailants and police typification as elements in police culture and interaction in work culture was manifest as humour, violence and solidarity in police culture and so on (See Diagram 2). I will examine each of the elements in turn.

According to police occupational cultural studies, 'meaning' in the police environment was defined by typifications and suspicion. Through socialization and training, police suspicion was encouraged to identify threats to person and authority as "symbolic assailants" (Skolnick, 1994: 45). Symbolic assailants were classifications by police that help police to identify gestures, attire and language that are suggestive of trouble. These classifications were thought of as "perceptual shorthands" used to single out offenders, display the authority of the police position and ensure contact with the justice system (Skolnick, 1994:45).

Symbols were also found within police-relevant categories and typifications. These classifications represented how police identified trouble-makers and those with values incongruent with the *police* value system (Van Maanen, 1978; Reiner, 2000). Police officers constructed typifications based on knowledge of those who challenged the 'middle-class values' of society. Police categories included: "good class villains", the professional criminal ; "police property", lower-class powerless groups (skid-row alcoholics) ; "rubbish", difficult clients; "challenger", lawyers and academics; "disarmers", (elderly, children); "do-gooders", anti-police activists; and "politicians", who are regarded with extra suspicion because of hidden agendas (Reiner, 2000: 95). Of course, there was also the infamous "asshole" designation, given to those who challenge the authority of the police (Van Maanen, 1978). Police symbols represented a pre-determined action

and behavioral approach to police-citizen contact. Symbols and categories influenced an officer's social interaction within the police environment.

Values were the principles, ideology and beliefs that support culture. Police values were (not exclusively) comprised of the police mandate and often involved cynicism, frustration and machismo. These values, in turn, were the foundation for other elements of occupational culture, such as humor and communication.

As part of police ideology, police 'mission' was often cited as a central feature of the police officer's occupation (Manning, 1997; Reiner, 2000; Brewer, 1991). The main assumption was that the police believe they protect morals and defend the 'thin blue line' between good and evil (Reiner, 2000). The police constructed and furthered this perspective to protect their role from criticism and to maintain a hold on power and resources. Some theorists argued that a "sacred canopy" covered the mundane world of police work (Reiner, 2000: 89; Manning, 1997) and the cultural drama of police work maintained "the frontline on the war on crime" (Manning, 1997:21). This association of morality and police work propelled a 'Dirty Harry' attitude among officers, where 'what is right' may be pursued over and above their legal authority to act (Klocklars, 1981).

Linked to the police mission, frustration with police work has emerged to form cynicism or pessimism among officers (Neiderhoffer, 1969; Vick, 1981; Klinger, 1997; Reiner, 2000).

Officers often develop a hard skin of bitterness, seeing all social trends in apocalyptic terms, with the police as a beleaguered minority about to be overrun by the forces of barbarism (Reiner, 2000:89).

Cynicism developed from a persistent commitment to the police mission and from a perceived lack of public support for crime control (Vick, 1981). Police officers

questioned the effectiveness of their role and eventually the justice system as a whole in a process of disillusionment from an exposure to deviance (Klinger, 1997).

Cynicism also arose from witnessing conditions of anomie, including sorrow, misery and horror associated with maintaining law and order (Neiderhoffer, 1969; Westley, 1970). The anomic conditions of policing created a “spiritual miasma”, where cynicism was required to cope with the immorality experienced in everyday work (Neiderhoffer, 1969: 96). As a police officer in Westley’s study put it, “You see a lot of misery and cussedness” and this forced the officer to reassess the environment around them, eventually judging everyone as a threat (Westley, 1970: 147).

Police culture values were embedded in a male-centred “ethos” of machismo, “lavatorial humor” and “exaggerated heterosexuality” (Brewer, 1991; Heidensohn, 1992; 1994; Fielding, 1995) which posed problems for female officers who must either withdraw from the culture of masculinity or engage in defensive retorts (Ferraro, 1989; Brewer, 1991; Ferraro and Pope, 1993; Heidensohn, 1992; 1994). In some variations of police theory, stereotypical values of the police “canteen” or off-duty police gatherings were perceived as a “pure form of hegemonic masculinity” (Fielding, 1995: 47). In an analysis that drew links between police machismo, criminal ‘thrills’ and paramilitarism, Fielding argued the police canteen culture was imbued with aggression, competition, enjoyment of conflict, heterosexuality, patriarchal attitudes and a siege mentality.

Alcohol was also reported to be an influential part of the police officer milieu, where off-duty conversation and culture are perpetuated by the “consumption of the pints” (Fielding, 1995; Reiner, 2000: 97). In his analysis, Fielding seemed to place the police canteen culture within a deviant ‘subcultural’ framework, contending that the canteen performs a ‘negative’ function, furthered by macho-talk and after work solidarity which, he argued, promotes prejudice, street justice and malpractices.

The culture of masculinity has also affected the expression of emotion among police. A police officer's emotions were viewed negatively and said to "undermine rationality and control, qualities which are deemed critical to professional competence" (Howard et al., 2000: 7-8). Emotions were thought to cloud an officer's reasoning and endanger the public and colleagues. Police officers were trained to remove emotion from their work, thus maintaining an "objective, fearless and calm" approach to policing (Pogrebin and Poole, 1988: 397). Machismo overrode emotions and protected an image of toughness among officers, but officers could not escape situations where emotions were rife (ie. traffic accidents, tragic deaths and grieving families). Often they were expressed through "safe emotional talk" that could be found in police humor (Howard et al., 2000:12; Pogrebin and Poole, 1991).

Police communication was exemplified by studies of narratives and talk, which were used to define and enable a common understanding of police work (Brewer, 1990; Shearing and Ericson, 1991; Chan, 1997; Frewin and Tuffin, 1998; Waddington, 1999a, 1999b). Stories or "tropes" operated as a "figurative resource" that guided the behavior of police officers and supported the time-held practices of policing (Shearing and Ericson, 1991: 486, 495). Cultural talk enabled an officer to communicate competently (Brewer, 1990; Shearing and Ericson, 1991), supported the status of the police group (Frewin and Tuffin, 1998), and integrated elements of the individual officer's experience into the police culture.

Narratives, rather than occupational rules, enabled behavior; officers "make" roles and "build" action within their culture (ibid: 486). Policing was a 'craft' supported by "stories, aphorisms and stratagems" that inform officers on a multitude of task activities, and their 'storybook' is added to a "vocabulary of precedents" (Shearing and Ericson,

1991: 489-491). Shearing and Ericson contended that police stories are situationally-derived and form "a subjectivity or sensibility" of action. In their words (1991: 492):

- a. Officers develop an instinctive wariness, what one officer called a "well planned lay-back."
- b. Police learn to act with a margin of force just beyond what their would-be opponents might use. One officer likened it to taking a five foot jump over a four foot ditch.

Stories thus formed a "way of being" through "a way of seeing" that was both guided and improvisational. The cultural talk of officers became integral to making sense of an occupation that could be "unpredictable, unexpected, unexplained, ambiguous and uncertain," (Shearing and Ericson, 1991: 500).

For other researchers, police communicated with stories to form an 'oral tradition,' that normalized danger (Brewer, 1990). Stories were passed down from senior colleagues ensuring "a distinctive group identity which subsumed a set of unwritten but binding rules and modes of thought...[that] was achieved without effort" (Young, 1995: 152). "Skills of vocabulary" and "coping discourses" allowed officers to account for and rationalized personal threats and dangers while on the job and at home (Brewer, 1990: 665). In the case of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, officers used a "fatalistic" discourse that rationalized death and deployed pragmatic knowledge to avoid danger and isolation (Brewer, 1990: 663-665). Police stories were told on and off duty, as officers normalized danger by reinforcing a collective sense of work rules and behavioral responses, and protected personal and family life despite the extraordinary dangers encountered in policing Northern Ireland (Brewer, 1990: 672).

Lore was knowledge shared between officers and became the substance of police storytelling and communication. Lore was developed through learned skills, expertise and behavior. Lore was also a collection of the in-group rules and 'recipe'

solutions to problems in police work. In pursuing job experience and cultural wisdom, police officers delineated a rule of action or “recipe” knowledge to aid aspects of their work (Ericson, 1982). Cultural recipes allowed for the reconstruction of order, the reproduction of occupational culture and the maintenance of solidarity in the officer’s work environment (Ericson, 1982; 1991).

Recipe rules are shared among police and formed a cultural playbook of responses to events that challenged their work. Recipe rules were not limited to ground-level experiences, but also included methods of social control and surveillance that have overtaken police work (Ericson and Haggerty, 1997). Recipe-oriented ‘resistance’ derived from a cultural reluctance to succumb to additional work, including paperwork and computer oriented tasks (ibid.). Officers thus used ingrained cultural ‘tricks of the trade’ to avoid workload and enable easing behavior.

Police officers interacted among themselves and the public in ways that were unique to police culture. Police culture research has documented humor, authority, solidarity and violence – which I have categorized as ‘modes of interaction’.

For police, humor had several strategic uses and allowed for a free flow of exchanges and “insider knowledge” (Pogrebin and Poole, 1988: 187). In these contexts, humor supported the values, beliefs and behaviors of the police group, enabled officers to socially orient themselves by bonding through ‘teasing’ and pranks, fixed social boundaries and acceptable moral positions and deflected stress by resorting to “gallows” and “dark” humor.

Humor functioned in four ways within the police occupation. First, it was used as “jocular aggression”, representing verbal countermeasures against supervisors, procedures, policies and occupational rules. Jokes allowed officers to express discontent in a contained manner that reinforced the solidarity between themselves and

other colleagues (Pogrebin and Poole, 1988: 190-194). Second, humor maintained the societal position of the officer through “audience degradation”. During patrol shifts, officers told humorous stories about situations with ‘stalelated’ parties and encounters that were “trivial, mundane, or unfounded” (ibid: 196). This type of humor degraded the difficult citizen and ensured the perception among police that they were societal problem solvers and moral superiors (ibid.). Third, when responding to the public, humor was used to justify discretion that bent rules or meted out “street justice” to citizens. Officers supported their “decision making and common sense understandings” by degrading the public and criminal justice system and elevating their decisions made while on duty (1988: 203). Fourth, “dark” or “gallows” humor was shared and circulated collectively and provided guides for coping with situations that “emotionally paralyse others” (ibid: 197-199, Waddington, 1999a, 1999b).

Young (1995) described how dark humor enabled coping for the realities of death and danger on the job. Young described police as an ‘anthropological’ looking glass; in a tribal fashion they were the “conscience of society,” clearing away “social abnormalities” (gruesome deaths) and “standing between society and its tormentors... [and] culture and unrestrained abnormality” (Young, 1995: 153). He argued that humour was a pragmatic tool for the police because they know that they cannot control such events and their efforts have had little impact on society (Young, 1995, 153-4). In ‘bad’ deaths (suicides, road accidents and domestic murders) officers used gallows humor to restore order to a situations “where you just want to throw up” (ibid: 158). Humor transformed the difficulties of death into manageable events and removed the realities associated with experiencing mortality (ibid: 165). Dark humor enabled officers to keep an insider’s perspective, maintaining the social distance that was required for their societal maintenance role (ibid: 166).

An officer's 'working personality' was formed around negotiating danger, expressing and protecting authority, and maintaining an efficient and effective occupation (Skolnick, 1994). The police personality extended to their off-duty lives as well (Skolnick, 1994). Police officers became isolated from the general public and depended upon colleagues to avoid social awkwardness that may arise with 'inexperienced citizens' (MacDonald, 2000). Particular tasks such as traffic duty, maintaining order at public events and regulating morality invited confrontations with the respectable community (Skolnick, 1994: 54). In these situations, the police officer was positioned against the ordinary citizen, thus augmenting the social distance between officers and civilians and increasing the solidarity of the police culture (ibid.).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature on stress and policing from the psychological tradition. Police stress has typically been framed within individualistic analyses, lacking consideration for the effect of occupational culture on coping. However, within policing, occupational culture and action were inseparable. In response, I offered an alternative for studying stress and coping in police work by using cultural analysis. When undertaking cultural analysis to examine the coping process, I recognized the importance of work groups in stress management and argued that the role of police occupational culture in coping must be investigated further.

In analyzing police culture, we saw that cultural elements such as interaction, values, signs and symbols, communication and lore maintained the substance of the work group, but also supported the individual worker. Police officers were socialized into an occupational cultural milieu that established their social position, provided resources and support for tragic and everyday troubles and enabled them to simply 'do

the job'. Consequently, police culture was 'palliative', allowing officers to adjust, manipulate, justify or cope with their environment. Waddington (1999a: 296), claimed that occupational cultural themes (fatalism, cynicism, symbolic assailant) aided officers to cope in an increasingly "fragile occupation." Following Waddington, I adopted a similar perspective on coping with stress in police work. Elements of work culture were therefore integral to the management of stress and must be considered in any such analysis.

In the next chapter, I illustrate the methodology used to analyse stress and coping in police work. I discuss how I conducted research with police, including my ethnographic method and several issues and problems as they related to my study. I identify how these issues lead to changes and adaptations in the research process, but were by and large positive events that added to my research experience. In addition, I chronicle several lessons that I recorded as a result of my ethnographic work.

Chapter Three: Methods

In order to identify stress and cultural coping, I conducted an ethnographic research project using participant observation and interviews with patrol officers of the Halifax Regional Police. This chapter describes the research process and methods, including: research and ethical issues; demographics of the Halifax Regional Police department; access to the field; sampling methodology; participant observation; interviews; key sponsors and my analysis of the ethnographic data. A final section details lessons learned while 'doing ethnography'.

Ethics and Research

In preparation for the study, I submitted an application to the Saint Mary's Research Ethics Board [REB] on May 2, 2002. Initially, I thought the project would receive quick acceptance, but there were concerns raised by the Board. I have included a discussion of these concerns in Appendix B for two reasons: to inform and aid research in the criminological field and provide constructive criticism of the ethical review process.

The first concern of the board was the confidentiality of participants. The REB requested that I inform the participants that I must report any illegalities (if witnessed) to the proper authorities, since "there is no legal right of confidentiality" and if necessary, I tell participants that I will "testify to that effect" (see Appendix B, item no. 4). I was clearly surprised at this suggestion since it went against the codes of ethics of several academic organizations, including the American Sociological Association.

I researched the topic of confidentiality and relied on Ted Palys' work at Simon Fraser University (<http://www.sfu.ca/~palys/articles.htm>), to formulate a response to the

board. Following Palys, I argued that criminological codes of ethics must hold personal information in strict confidence even without legal guarantees or protection. Protecting confidentiality should be of the utmost importance to a researcher and release of that information should only be done to protect the life or health of persons involved. An unlimited guarantee of confidentiality is integral to protect research participants, but also maintain the validity and reliability of data and further research. With this response, I intended to protect my participants.

The other major concern raised by the REB was my communication and feedback with participants during the field study. The REB required that I “provide all participants with referral information [to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)] and feedback immediately upon completion of their participation” (see Appendix B). I developed two responses to this suggestion. First, the suggestion to give “referral information” to participants implied a ‘medical-model’ rather than a “sociologically” informed method of research. The REB assumed that because my project would discuss stress and police work, it had to be conducted with some ‘official medical or psychiatric’ presence throughout the process. This approach was used in previous psychological studies of stress and policing and was a perspective that I was keen to avoid in my project. Medical and psychological approaches objectify and minimize the contribution of participants. My project will emphasize their experiences, rather than statistical analyses, diagnoses and treatment. For these reasons, my main goal was to disconnect ‘stress’ from psychological influences. As a result, the suggestion of the REB would re-insert a medical-psychological template which narrowed the focus of research. I refused their request and argued that a more prudent approach would be to seek the advice of the department on discussing stress with their employees.

Indeed, before the research began, I had discussions with peer-to-peer counselors of the police department's Employee Assistance program (EAP). They echoed my concerns about providing 'referral information', and stated that the project would have been more difficult if I had given participants the impression that something needed to be healed, fixed, medicated and controlled. I was further reassured after my discussions with EAP officers that my plan to conduct a project without 'psychological' influences was a sensible endeavor.

In response to the issue of providing "feedback immediately upon completion of their [the officers] participation", I realized that the REB did not understand the nature of ethnographic research. I reiterated my concerns as follows:

"...the issue of feedback 'immediately upon completion of their participation' is not possible due to the nature of ethnographic research ... Any attempt to preclude the final analysis of the research data would put the validity of the research at stake and provide 'guess work' estimations of the project to participants ... From this perspective, I believe the appropriate method for feedback is to provide information after the project is completed."
(see Appendix B)

Board members seemed misinformed about ethnographic research as an examination of social events, culture and interaction. These requests suggested review boards were either not fully informed about the variety of research methods or were committed to a particular type of positivistic and medical research.

After my responses to the REB, my application was given a second review. My concerns were addressed by the board and I was informed that I had permission to begin the research. While this was good news, the ethical review process had been lengthy and I struggled to keep a positive outlook during the long and idle waiting period.

As a result of experience with the university Research Ethics Board, I have come to question their utility. Yes, these boards were created to prevent harmful studies and protect the 'researched' through guarantees of anonymity and confidentiality. But, who

are they actually protecting; research participants from harm or the university from possible litigation? Moreover, objective guidelines must be put into place to prevent the delays of project applications as a result of misplaced or irrelevant reviewer concerns. Review Boards and reviewers need to maintain an informed approach about the multiplicity of research methodologies and prevent unreasonable criticisms and delays.

The Halifax Regional Police (HRP) Department

At present, the city of Halifax comprises of four former municipalities, Halifax, Dartmouth, Bedford and Halifax County. As one of the oldest settlements in Canada, it has one of the first police forces in Canada. The city of Halifax was first policed on July 18, 1749, one month after its foundation. On this date, the 3,000 Halifax settlers voted to chose constables from ship crews to police the area. The official inception of the Halifax Police department did not occur until 1864, with the Dartmouth police following in 1873 and Bedford in 1982. In their colourful history, Halifax police were the first Canadian department to use telegrams in crime prevention and install radio transmitters in police vehicles. Also, the adoption of the 9-11 system was a Nova Scotian first with emergency services in 1982 (<http://www.police.halifax.ns.ca/about/history.htm>, Retrieved July 6, 2005).

With a combined population of almost 400,000 people in 2002, Halifax was policed by a regional police force. This force was created in the mid-1990s by amalgamating the separate departments of Dartmouth, Bedford and Halifax. The resulting 'Halifax Regional Police Department' was a mid-sized police department, comprising approximately 400 officers. Currently, the Halifax Regional Police shares enforcement responsibilities in the municipality with the RCMP. Halifax Regional Police

officers patrol the inner core of Halifax, while the RCMP polices the outlying suburban areas. Both agencies combine their efforts for some investigative duties as well.

At the time of the research, the jurisdiction for the Halifax Regional Police department was divided into three main divisional areas in the urban core areas of Halifax. The divisions East, Central and West, contained a downtown core with over 150 licensed drinking establishments, several business parks, a number of universities, provincial highways, natural and historical parks, a large seaport and various residential areas. Each division had its own station and a number of community stations. The Central division (downtown) station also housed the headquarters offices, investigative sections and the police jail.

The department had approximately 300 operational officers, who conducted patrol and specialized police work, including: k-9, street crime surveillance, 'problem-oriented' patrol, traffic, emergency response and many investigative duties. Each district had four 'watches' and a total of 52 officers. A group of officers also worked 'power shift' as a relief shift for the four watches. Officers patrolled areas of their district (East, West, Central) and worked with a set 'team' of colleagues. Officers worked with their team for the duration of their yearly schedule. Patrol officers worked four twelve-hour days with a two day, two night shift rotation, followed by four days vacation.

Typically, officers patrolled in single-person units or patrol cars, unless an officer was training a new recruit. Occasionally, the 'paddy wagon' units were deployed and I had two officers as participants for a shift. Paddy wagons were used for transporting violent or drunk persons to the department jail.

Doing Ethnography

The ethnographic field study consisted of observational sessions (n=20), structured interviews (n=23) and informal conversations and discussions (n=64) over a four month period. In total, I interviewed or observed a third of the 195 patrol officers in the Halifax Regional Police. The field study involved 218 hours of participant observation, which produced 91 pages of field notes and 209 pages of transcribed interviews.

Access to the Field

The formal application to the Halifax Regional Police comprised an 'access request' letter and 'terms of reference' which was sent to the Superintendent of Administration (see Appendix C). The letter identified the theoretical background for the study, sample size, sampling method, data collection method and ethical considerations. I included the interview guide and the informed consent form (see Appendix F, H). Formal access requests were met in a week by the superintendent, who accepted my project after a review by a staff sergeant in the training section. After an interview with the staff sergeant and the usual background checks, I was permitted to formally commence the project.

Sampling

I first tried to contact as many officers as possible by email correspondence. I provided the staff sergeant with two samples of emails to recruit participants for the study (see Appendix D). The shorter version was chosen and he forwarded my email to all patrol officers in the department. Interested officers were asked to contact me about how they wished to participate: by interview or by field observation. Rather than have the department co-ordinate a schedule of ridealongs and interviews with patrol officers, I

had participants contact me directly. This process maintained the confidentiality of participants and removed the onus on the department to “recruit” candidates. My initial request resulted in only two volunteers, who became the first ridealong participants in the ethnography. Two possible issues affected the response rate. First, the invitations to participate were delivered via email correspondence. Police officers are bombarded with information requests. My invitation was lost in the multitude of information that officers read daily. Second, police officers were suspicious of outsiders. I was not generally recognized and “who you know” contacts are so important in police circles, making it necessary for someone to vouch for my trustworthiness. Fortunately, one officer became a key sponsor. I found out that his “personal guarantees” about me were the reason others agreed to participate. This pattern continued as more officers were added to the sample. Very quickly, I became a familiar face on patrol shifts, and the sample of participants increased accordingly.

Participant Observation

The field work began in July 2002 and continued until October 2002. Field observation involved accompanying patrol officers in police vehicles (ridealongs) as well as interacting with them during breaks, down-times (‘canteen’) and at social events. I made chronological field notes of incidents and conversations (e.g. between ‘calls for service’ that occurred during a shift). Field notes were created and organized according to an observational template (Appendix G). The observational template served as a non-exclusive pre-session memory cue, for conducting observations while in the field. I constructed the template using key elements of police culture that I thought would be significant in coping with stress (mission and cynicism; solidarity and isolation; recipe rules; humor and stories; machismo).

Usually, I took field notes after an event or during an opportune moment. Incidents that were deemed stressful by myself or the officer (dangerous, traumatic, negative) were specifically noted. Generally, I identified a situation as stressful if emotion, difficulty and strain were present among those involved. This can be illustrated by a few examples:

We respond to a car crash -- a pregnant woman was injured and possibly also her baby. This situation brought emotion to some officers, who indicated they could identify with the mother -- I recorded the stories officers told of similar experiences with car accidents and serious injuries.

A group of officers are called to 'talk down' a child in a state of distress who threatens to cut his own throat. After arriving, the situation was resolved very quickly, but because it was strange to see a young child who wished to die, officers showed awkwardness while handcuffing the small boy. I took note of the few moments of reflection between those involved in the arrest. A few officers recognized the emotional gravity of the call and quietly discussed among themselves how 'odd' some of their calls can be.

After each incident, I would note the reaction from the officer and their colleagues. I would follow-up an incident with several questions on the meaning of the event and how coping was used (e.g. "How did you feel about that (incident)?", "How do you handle such situations?"). I also asked officers questions such as: "What routine or everyday stressors (if any), affected your job?" These questions enabled me to pursue topics that were not included in the interview schedule. During canteen and social events, I would follow-up on incidents that had occurred, asking for their interpretation and other stories on coping with similar events in the past.

Ridealongs began with shift briefings, which were official meetings for officers working the shift. Briefings took place at divisional stations and were conducted with a boardroom type atmosphere and moderated by a sergeant or shift supervisor. Officers were usually informed about current crime trends in their area and major calls that had occurred overnight or prior to the shift. Any special patrol assignments that were to be

distributed by the sergeant were given during a shift briefing. During these briefings, I was present as conversations and interaction between workers took place. I met my assigned officer at the shift briefing and I was usually introduced to their colleagues at that time. Briefings were also a source of informal conversation, banter, practical joking and storytelling between officers and the sergeant.

Ridealongs usually lasted 10-12 hours and generally consisted of random patrol and responding to calls¹. During patrol, I frequently accompanied one officer in a cruiser or occasionally rode with two officers in the backseat of the police van (paddy wagon). I was present at all aspects of their job. When I rode in the passenger seat for regular patrol and I was occasionally asked to use the computer or 'CAD'. I read calls as they came in or sent messages to other police vehicles. During this time, officers told stories about past experiences, shared their knowledge of police work and answered interview questions.

Officers responded to calls and encountered the public. I stood nearby listening to the conversation and observing their interaction. While at calls for service, I accompanied the officers through houses, residences, apartment buildings, businesses, parks, bars, malls and other locations where they were called. I was able to witness officers making arrests, searching, handcuffing, transporting and booking in suspects into jail. Many officers also conducted vehicle stops and I would stand opposite the officer, listening to the conversation. On other notable instances, I accompanied officers along during vehicle chases, random roadside stops for drunk drivers and speed detection stops. Officers generally attempted to avoid catching up on their investigations, follow-ups and paperwork sessions to provide me with only the 'action'

¹ On only two occasions did the ride-along observation end earlier than most: one night shift due to lack of co-operation from participating officers (mentioned in Ethnographic Lessons); another shift because I had been scheduled for a ridealong the following morning.

calls. However, there were many instances where investigation and paperwork were necessary and could not be avoided.

Canteen observations were defined as those beyond public scrutiny and usually encompassed breaks, downtimes and informal conversations. Each ride along observation had numerous canteen moments between their 'official duties'. On a few occasions, officers went to isolated locations in their area and met with other officers. In these instances, officers parked their vehicles in such a manner that allowed both drivers to talk freely or they stood outside their vehicles for easier conversation and banter. On a couple of occasions, a group of officers joined us in a police van to share a common lunch at a late night rendezvous. In addition, other canteen sessions took place at restaurants, coffee shops, back rooms, weight rooms and locker areas in the divisional office. I found these breaks to be an opportunity for officers to reflect on their recent experiences with colleagues as well as an opportunity to witness coping-related discussions and activities. Being involved in these experiences also contributed to developing greater trust and rapport, necessary for the interview process.

Social events were get-togethers or parties held in pubs, bars, pool rooms and restaurants. I was invited to four events, but only attended two². Both events took place at a local bar and restaurant. I met officers from the division as well as others that were not on patrol duties. The group and I shared conversation over pool games, drinks and meals. Officers seemed eager to tell me about 'the party I missed last night' and offer a story of what had occurred. Of those events that I did attend, I found they were crucial for building rapport and as I would realize, allowed me to develop contacts and key sponsors.

² I was invited to two house-parties by key sponsors. Unfortunately, because of time and scheduling problems, I was not able to attend.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with officers who participated in ridealongs and with those who volunteered to be interviewed only. Interviews during the field observations were conducted in the vehicle, usually at an opportune time during the shift (often, “between calls” for service). Other interviews were conducted at the station. All interviews were taped using a micro-cassette recorder. Interviews averaged 40 minutes in tape time, but usually took longer to finish because of call dispatch interruptions³.

The interview format was semi-structured. If a response was unclear or needed clarification, I asked follow-up questions. I spent a significant amount of time encouraging as much discussion as possible. Questions in the interview guide (Appendix F) gathered three categories of data: demographic (ie. age, years of service, education), to identify characteristics of my sample; police culture (ie. ‘What is good police work?’, ‘What characteristics do you think typify a police officer?’), to re-examine notions of police culture; and stress and coping (i.e. ‘When is policing dangerous?’; ‘How do officers cope with difficult situations, events or occurrences?’; ‘How does exposure to trauma, negativity and danger affect policing?’).⁴ Stress-coping questions were structured to reveal methods and strategies that were absent from the observational sessions.

As time passed, I realized that it was difficult to observe serious stressful situations due to the randomness of incidents or the scheduling of my ridealongs⁵. I

³ On two occasions, I had to finish the interview at a later date because the shift was too busy with calls. One interview was not completed due to rapport problems (discussed in Ethnographic Lessons).

⁴ For further reading on interviewing see Berg (2000) and Cain (1973).

⁵ Although frustrating, many times I would hear – ‘You should have been here yesterday!’ or ‘You should have seen what happened after you left’. Observing everything I had hoped was near impossible.

increasingly relied on interviews to fill the information gaps. Consequently, I would ask police officers to recount as many past experiences as possible using anecdotes and examples to help describe these activities. I found that the interviews were a valuable addition to my observational research and helped fulfill my research objectives.

Key Sponsors

This research would not have been possible without the assistance and contribution of “key sponsors”. Key sponsors were close contacts made during the research. These officers were a source of advice on the organization and contacts with other officers. I accompanied key sponsors (and their partners) on at least two observation sessions each. Six key sponsors were instrumental in developing the research sample as my notes recorded:

Before applying to the department for ‘formal’ permission, I presented my proposal to a key policing sponsor who I had contact in the context of my undergraduate honors thesis research. The officer, a constable of fourteen years, had encouraged me to pursue the topic of stress and policing. But, he expressed reservations about the project – assuming that I would be ‘assessing’ the stress levels of officers within police culture. He indicated that most officers rarely discuss stress or know that they experience it. When I clarified that my approach would be investigating stress *and coping* (using a qualitative and sociological approach), I was referred to contact other officers including departmental EAP staff.

During my next meeting, both my sponsor and two other officers offered a number of stories that revealed humorous exchanges before and after calls and at the station. At the end of this meeting, they agreed to participate in the field study and to mention the research to other officers in the department and at an upcoming social event. On other advice, I avoided using the term “stress” so as to encourage greater participation and substituted the words “difficulties” and “difficult situation” (see Appendix F).

Data Ordering

Participant observation data was recorded in a notebook. The next day, I typically transcribed my field notes into a time-ordered recollection of what had happened during ridealongs, canteen sessions and social events. I created a narrative that included conversations, events and activities from the observational session. I also recorded the length of the session, number of field contacts and location/division of the shift. Interviews were transcribed after the field work was completed. This was a significant undertaking, requiring 160 hours to record the interviews accurately. After the field observations and interviews were completed, coding the data (field notes and interviews) followed. Using Kirby and McKenna (1989) as a guide, I reviewed the data thoroughly and I constructed categories to organize it. My main categories were: stressors (i.e. surveillance, isolation, death), police culture information (i.e. mission, solidarity, machismo), coping measures (i.e. humor, street justice, stories, authority) and methodological concerns.

Data was organized with 'Nud*ist' (N6), a computer program designed for qualitative research. Interviews and field observation data were coded together. N6 allowed for cropped sections of data to be attached to categories. As a result, categories with the most data provided the substance for my analysis in Chapter Four and Five.

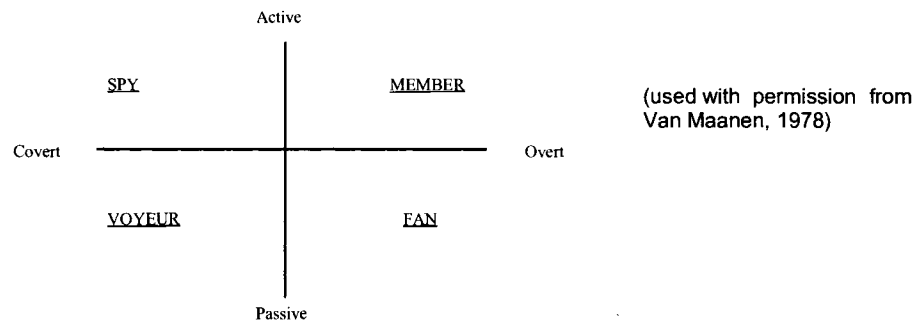
Ethnographic Lessons

Doing ethnographic research presented many challenges: difficulties of obtaining access, resolving one's role in research, gaining acceptance and trust among police

associates, and managing conflicts within the police research setting (Van Maanen, 1982; 1973).

While engaged in participant observational study, I was often required to quickly determine my involvement in situations that were unpredictable, violent and harmful. I also adapted to each situation separately and defined my position with participants. According to Van Maanen (1978: 344), a researcher must determine how they will negotiate between active and passive roles within covert and overt contexts. These efforts allow the researcher to control the impact on participants, so research can continue effectively. Van Maanen's diagram outlined four levels of involvement: covert-overt, active-passive. "Member, fan, voyeur and spy" were roles that the researcher adopts, depending on the situations and responses from participants (Van Maanen, 1978: 344). Each role adopts its own perspective on research and a different level of involvement for the researcher. A *member* was directly involved in the field activities and participated in conversations, actions and decision-making. A *fan* was a sideline observer, occasionally involving themselves where appropriate. As a *voyeur*, the participant was unaware of the researcher's presence, but no involvement is made in field activities or interaction. And of course, a *spy* was a completely covert field involvement, where the identity of the researcher and research objectives were kept from the participants. A *spy* participated in events as if they were naturally involved in the activity.

Figure 1. Van Maanen's Ethnographer roles



The participant observer's role influenced the depth of data collection in the field.

The vast majority of police research has been conducted from the 'fan' role (Van Maanen, 1982). However, in the context of a field study, a researcher must adapt to other roles that fit the situation and maintain relationships with participants under study. There was really no pure way of doing ethnography. While doing this study, I was perceived as a student, a 'wanna-be', an insider, a behavioral judge, a 'know-it-all' to name the common ones. Determining my role was a difficult task, as demonstrated by the following example:

During a night time ridealong with a new female officer, I encountered a situation that challenged my involvement as 'researcher'. We had just finished patrolling a local industrial park, when dispatch made a general request for "units in the vicinity" to respond to a bar fight. We were first on the scene and found a brawl in full progress. There were ten to twelve men and women fighting in front of the bar. The officer left the vehicle, with instructions to me to stay "around the vehicle". I watched as the officer approached the melee and attempted to separate the parties. The fight was extensive and spread closer to my location. After a minute, the officer singled-out two females and took one into custody after the patron had assaulted another female directly in front of her. The woman was hollering at the officer when placed in the vehicle. The officer then returned to the fight and tried to separate a group of men. The officer was getting knocked about and eventually lost her baton. The bouncers, realizing that the officer was overwhelmed became involved in the fight. I watched not knowing whether to obey her order or to lend a hand in the situation. To add to the situation, friends of the woman who had been arrested were attempting to help the prisoner escape from the vehicle. Two people opened the door of the car. Sensing the potential danger for release, I turned to face the women and yelled in a stern voice, "Shut that

door, NOW!" They looked shocked, but then started shouting obscenities. I said again, "You heard what I said, *shut* the door." Thankfully, they obeyed – but not without several derogatory comments and suggestions that I was a "narc" or plain clothes officer. Fortunately, a second police car entered the parking lot a few minutes later. As I watched more police vehicles arrive, I was again an outsider watching events pass in front of me, but I was much more cognizant of how quickly matters can get out of hand. Later, I realized that I had been put in danger by the officer's decision to act without waiting for backup. She was later chastised by other officers for acting without their assistance. [Field Notes: July 12, 2002]

In some situations, I assumed the 'member' role and was a "police officer's assistant", proactively performing small tasks such as: helping search a location for a suspect; holding doors for officers making arrests; becoming an informal witness to incidents (i.e. "What did you see or hear?"); and acting as an extra 'body' to ease a potentially dangerous situation. When members of the public questioned my presence, I was often referred to as: "officer so-and-so"; "He's with victim services." "He's a member." "He's a trainee cadet." Rarely was I termed a "ridealong" or a "researcher" and this was especially so in cases where being an onlooker would have escalated the situation (such as domestic disturbances). Whenever possible, I identified myself, but such times were few and far between. Ethnographic research requires the researcher to "go with the flow", but at times this leaves the researcher in an awkward position.

Police ethnographic research challenged me to maintain a neutral perspective and unbiased involvement. In the bar event described above, I reluctantly relinquished my 'fan' role and had to adopt the 'member' role. In other events, I was an unwilling 'member'. Unlike Van Mannen, I was an untrained and unarmed student with limited knowledge about the procedures for handling violence. I learned that conducting research requires 'on the spot' thinking that places the researcher in situations that may or may not require a different response than the typical 'outsider' one. As Van Maanen (1982: 139) wisely observed:

Fieldwork means both involvement and detachment, both loyalty and betrayal – both openness and secrecy, and, most likely, both love and hate. Somewhere in the space between these always personalized stances, toward those one studies, ethnographies get written. (Van Maanen, 1982: 139)

Doing ethnography can jeopardize one's safety. I witnessed several situations that were dangerous: vehicle chases, general brawls, police – citizen fights, death threats and violent arrests. Usually, participants are aware of the researcher's vulnerability and some prescribe preventative measures. During one ridealong, a police officer instructed me on how to respond in situations involving vehicle stops and arrests. He suggested that I refrain from taking notes during the stop, unbuckle my seatbelt and watch the officer and interior of the other vehicle – in case it was necessary to leave the cruiser. I realized that awareness and body positioning was needed when accompanying police. While I relied on my own instincts for safety, I was also dependent on the knowledge of the officers I rode with.

Relatedly and importantly, I was also subjected to the situational stressors that afflicted officers but without the same level of support and training. While I did not participate in the 'worst case scenarios', I experienced some serious situational stressors.

One of the last calls tonight was to assist another unit to remove a few drunken men from a wharf, as was requested by security personnel in the area. Dan (a pseudonym) and I arrive and notice that one of the men is lying on the ground, the other is sitting on a bench holding two nearly empty wine bottles. The man on the ground is moaning, reaching out to one of us as if saying with his eyes, "Help me up." As I look over the men, I can't help but notice the smell and the yellowish stains of urine on their over-worn jeans. Dan has called a paddy wagon to pick up the men for transport to the station. He tells me they will be delayed responding because of another call.

In front of me, the security officers are standing by, watching the men and looking towards the police officers. Almost immediately, I am very troubled by the situation, watching the drunken man looking at me as if asking for help. Disturbingly, I freeze, unsure what to do -- help the man

or stand there looking unaffected. I couldn't believe the reaction from the police officers at the scene, who were almost ignored the man. After we had arrived, Dan looked at the man on the ground, then started towards a yacht nearby, leisurely inspecting its condition. Another officer, who had arrived before us, was unconcerned and ignoring the men by looking out at the water. I was left standing there, looking at the drunken man on the ground – feeling helpless, but in a situation where I wanted to help and console him, but was trapped by my feelings to remain 'in league' with the officers I was with that night. Almost that instant, the emotions of the situation hit me and I felt incredibly guilty for leaving the car with my Tim Horton's hot chocolate and standing there watching, doing nothing.

As the paddy wagon arrived, the man had been lying on the ground for about five minutes. Dan returned from his short expedition down the boardwalk and joked with me, "Gonna help them out?" Despite these officer's good intentions, it still did not relieve my regret about attending this call. I've never felt so bad about a situation to date and this one certainly hit home. To see the man's eyes looking at me as if saying, "Help me", and realizing my indecision about the whole thing, my heart sank as Dan and I returned to the car to leave the area. I didn't feel very good for a while after the incident and certainly thought about it after I returned home.

(Field notes: September 6, 2002)

This and other situations left me feeling somewhat "depressed", and raised questions as to why such events occur and why some people are so unfortunate and destitute. After these situations, I often confided in friends and family to help me cope with these experiences. I spoke with my wife several times, seeking advice and solace after observing these experiences. These conversations occurred during downtimes on the ridealongs or after a field observation session. My parents were also good sources for me to voice concerns about police work and especially traumatic events that I witnessed or the difficulties of shift-work. Talking about the experiences was a source of stress relief. But, there are some terrible tragedies that I will not be able to forget for a long time. Ironically, academic ethics protect the participants of a study from harm or the 'academic community' from damages, but I can't help wonder who assists the researcher in conducting emotionally charged and challenging research. It is easy to

forget that there are personal hazards in being closely immersed in any culture and work environment.

Establishing rapport was important for the success of my ethnographic work (see also Manning, 1997; Van Maanen, 1982; 1978; Westley, 1970). The researcher must manage relations and build trust to ensure that information was willingly shared and participant recruitment continued without problems. When conducting an ethnography of police, you must gain trust among participants. However, this was difficult in the face of conflicts between administrators and line officers, as some participants are suspicious of the 'value' of the research and resort to secrecy and in-group solidarity among police (Van Maanen, 1982; 1978). As a result, this was not a straight-forward undertaking and I found that maintaining rapport requires strategic actions. Here are several key points that I found aided rapport while in the field:

- Maintain good key sponsors. They inform others about the research and help you gain trust and acceptance.
- First impressions are important. The quality of contact at the beginning of the field study carries throughout the research endeavour.
- As soon as possible, reassure the participants about the research goals and field any questions or concerns they may have. Ensure a "comfort zone" from the outset.
- Try to make your role and involvement as clear as possible before entering the field. This will ensure that rapport is not effected by uncertainty in the field researcher's position.
- Treat every person as a possible contributor to the project -- anyone could provide crucial experiences.

- If possible, hold off for as long as possible before doing formal interviews.

The more time given to rapport building, the better the results when an interview is conducted.

- Be prepared to be tested. Officers challenged my knowledge about policing, the department, sociological theory and my reasons for studying police. These questions were usually asked 'on the spot' and in the presence of others. For example, a sergeant interrupted a briefing to ask questions about the research. He began in a loud voice, "Now, who in the hell are you?" I quickly responded my name and a one-liner on my project. Luckily, I passed his examination. These were tests of acceptance similar to those mentioned by Van Mannen (1978).

Throughout the research, I reassured officers that I was not assessing their performance and I tried to be non-threatening. Consequently, I built positive relationships with officers in the department because I too had experienced the stressful situations with them. When retelling a stressful situation, police officers would indicate I was present. This created an "associative bond" between those involved and me, and my reactions to those incidents were often the subject of friendly jokes. I was increasingly accepted among the rank and file and less and less thought of as a ridealong 'outsider'. This allowed me to experience a regular flow of social interaction that would normally have occurred without an outsider present. In many instances, officers said, "You missed a good one last night!" -- "You're leaving? Aw, a gun call just came in!" It was clear that they wanted to include me and trusted me to witness events as one of them.

Of course, there were instances where rapport was unsuccessful despite preparation. During a night shift with two officers, I experienced the following:

Normally, at the beginning of the ridealong, officers were hesitant about the research, but these issues are resolved when the research goals are clarified. However, on this shift an awkwardness extended throughout the ridealong. I found it difficult to connect with the officers – and despite my probing, their answers remained short and unproductive.

I hoped that the interview would help the situation, but I realized that this was of little interest to them. My observations were confirmed when they abandoned the interview to meet other officers and make small talk. Despite my hopes that their co-operation would improve as time passed, this was not the case.

[Field Notes: August 21, 2002]

I attributed my problems to the following circumstances. First, I wasn't properly introduced to the participant. I was simply introduced in passing and had little time to inform them about the project. Second, one partner had no knowledge of the ridealong until after we met. Third, we spent the first four hours doing paperwork and I was not involved. Fourth, because of the paperwork, we were unable to attend any calls and missed many of the situations that would have contributed to their participation. Finally, the officers held negative views about academic research. When apologizing for not doing an interview, one officer responded, "Well, you can probably make up our answers anyway." It was clear that they had little respect for the work I had been doing. Fortunately, this was a single event but it exemplifies what can happen when proper rapport is not achieved.

Conclusion

Doing ethnographic research presented a number of challenges. A study must carefully balance the needs and expectations from all parties involved, including: the academy; the organization and its participants; and the individual researcher.

Academic research required supervisory and ethical approval before it could commence. Both processes were a significant undertaking and demanded that the

research met certain academic standards and presented no risks to the public. Gaining acceptance from participants was not without its own difficulties. I tried to manage the requirements of the organization and their administrative gate keepers, but without rapport and acknowledgment from the participants themselves, any amount of planning would have been wasted. Rapport-building was a continual challenge and was always changing with additional participants within a closed-door culture.

Most importantly, I faced various personal challenges: maintaining ethics, ensuring my own well-being and achieving my research objectives. I was constantly tested by participants, gate keepers and even bystanders during field studies. In these tests, it was a struggle to stay ethical and adhere to methodological standards. In addition, when studying police work personal safety was an issue. The research environment was fluid, public and potentially dangerous. My personal well-being was reliant on the use of common-sense and trusting the good judgment of the research subjects.

Ethnographic research was a balancing act of sorts, one that required continual attention to all aspects of the study. I have shed light on some of my endeavors and I hope that the challenges encountered in the methods process will inform others and help improve further studies.

In the next chapter, I present some of my findings. I discuss the prominent stressors of local police work and draw comparisons with previous studies on police stress. I provide a wider context for these stressors, something that was largely absent in previous studies. My goal is to demonstrate that ethnographic and socio-criminological studies add depth to the study of stress and coping in police work.

Chapter Four: Stress and Police Work

The literature on police stress has examined the stressors of police work. Authors have illustrated varying stressors on the job, including: frustrations with the criminal justice system, excessive paperwork and workload, critical incidents and sudden deaths, domestic violence, shift work, testifying in court, physical danger and management conflict (Vulcano, Barnes, Breen, 1984; Violanti, Marshall, Howe, 1985; Violanti, Marshall, 1983; Violanti, 1983; Perrier, Toner, 1984; Kroes, 1988; Sigler, Wilson, 1988; Comans, Evans, 1991; Stotland, 1991; Crank, Caldero, 1991; Patterson, 1992; Alexander, Walker, 1993; Brown, Cooper, Kirkcaldy, 1994; Cannizzo, Liu, 1995; Brown, Fielding, Grover, 1999; Peterson, 1999; Patterson, 1999; Barker, 1999; Patterson, 2000; Howard, Tuffin, Stephens, 2000; Dick, 2000; Davey, Obst, Sheehan, 2001; Toch, 2002).

In this chapter, I discuss the stressors among officers at Halifax. My discussion of stress is significantly different from previous studies, which focus on statistical measures alone (i.e. Leonard and Allison, 1999), rather than examining stressors within their original context. It was my intent to *illustrate* the difficulties faced by officers in their own words. As part of my analysis, I also recorded reported stressors. Officers were asked to identify stressors of the police occupation. Interview questions explored job-based difficulty and social negativity and asked officers to report on challenging and undesirable situations. I gathered data from interviews and used text units⁶ to organize the information statistically. As shown in Table 1, surveillance, trauma and negativity, social isolation, danger and violence, uncertainty and harm to children were more frequently reported stressors among participants. Officers also reported other

⁶ A 'text unit' equals one paragraph of a verbatim interview.

difficulties, including management, public complaints, media and publicity, staffing shortages, shift-work, helplessness and faulty or inadequate equipment.

Table 1. Stressors reported by Halifax Regional Police officers.

Stressor	Text Units	Percentage
Surveillance related	82	16.6
Trauma and Negativity	79	16
Social Isolation	76	15.4
Danger and Violence	54	11
Uncertainty (the unknown)	40	8.1
Harm to Children	32	6.5
Management	30	6
Public Complaints	26	5.3
News media and Publicity	24	4.8
Staffing	21	4.4
Shift-work	14	2.8
Helplessness	13	2.7
Faulty/Inadequate Equipment	2	0.4
Total Text Units	493	100.0

As seen in Table 1., surveillance and trauma related stressors had an almost equal representation in the ethnographic data (16.6% and 16%). Together, both stressors accounted for about a third of the stressors mentioned by police officers. As a result, officers spoke about both surveillance practices and traumatic scenes more frequently than any others. Social isolation followed closely (15.4%), as officers reported experiencing alienation from the public as a result of their job. Interestingly, danger and violence -- what the lay-person might think as one of the more 'obvious' stressors -- ranked fourth (11%) considerably lower than surveillance, trauma and social isolation. Other stressors were also reported by officers, although with much less frequency.

Also of note in Table 1 was the nature of the reported stressors. When reviewing the stressors, I identified two sources of stress prevalent among police:

internal and external. Interestingly, about 71% of the stressors reported by Halifax police officers were related to the external environment of the police officer (i.e. trauma, danger, social isolation). Secondary to that were internal stressors at 29%, whether conflicts or difficulties as a result of supervisory or surveillance pressure, management conflict, staffing shortages, shift-work or faulty equipment. The data from my ethnographic observations and interviews provided a significant opportunity for context and explanation of the stressors reported by police officers.

The “Surveillant Assemblage” and Stress

Recent police theory reveals an increase in surveillance technologies which subject police officers to varying degrees of supervision, monitoring and information gathering (Bogard, 1996; Ericson and Haggerty, 1997; 2000; Whitaker, 1999; Gould, 2002). Haggerty and Ericson's (2000) term “surveillant assemblage” described how surveillance mechanisms have expanded exponentially, in a ‘rhizomatic’ manner. They are now deeply rooted and interlinked in society, much like root systems or spider webs (Haggerty and Ericson, 2000).

At Halifax, integrated practices of documentation and observation were supported by portable laptop computers, integrated computer dispatch systems, digital cameras, cell phones, blood and DNA testing, fingerprint scan systems, GPS transmitters and investigative databases. Information and data gathering technologies were inseparable parts of an officer's everyday work world and they were overwhelmed by the technological conditions of their work. According to one officer:

Paperwork is just a huge burden. Everything we do is documented, you know six years from now, something I did today, somebody might be looking it up...there are civil suits that last for years that don't get started for two or three years...and then you get second guessed and that's a little stressful.

[Interview: July 31, 2002]

The human body was often the target of increased surveillance and this created a virtual self or a 'data double' for those involved (Haggerty and Ericson, 2000). This 'data double' became a source of public inspection and evaluation. Here is one officer's explanation of the pressure he faced as described in my field notes:

The most stressful thing is the 'to do list' of what investigations to complete during a shift cycle. When faced with due dates of investigation and assignments, the officer claimed "that is where the stress comes into play." Because he is constantly monitored by the sergeant on what cases must be filled and finished, the consequences of not completing a report were quite serious and could involve being charged under the Police Act or losing a case in the courts. These consequences were thought as more stressful than dangerous situations, including gun calls.

[Field Notes: August 26, 2002]

Officers found themselves caught in a public and private web of surveillance or "surveilled environment" where work practices were constantly being monitored and documented (see Ericson and Haggerty, 1997; MacDonald, 2000). One officer explained how his data 'trail' exposed a questionable discretionary decision he had made earlier in the week:

The night before, a man had been seen by a neighbour loading shotguns into his house from the street. The neighbour called the police. The officer received the dispatch and responded, eventually finding the man and questioning him about the report. After a while, the officer explained that the man 'knew he was caught' and rather than giving the officer a hard time, the man decided to give the officer his restricted weapon for destruction. As a result of the man's cooperation, the officer decided not to charge the man and had only confiscated the weapon.

Tonight, however, he realized that the GIS units were serving a warrant at the same location and thought he had messed up somehow, where they would find out about his discretionary decision the previous night. His worry was that the report that he had filed for the weapon could have turned up on the computer database as being used in a crime and he had missed another

serious offence in his quick investigation of the incident. Despite the worries of reprimand for his actions, he would later find out that the detectives were serving a warrant related to another issue. When we finally met up with the officers involved, he explained the incident and joked with them about how he thought he was in hot water over the confiscated shotgun. Because the police database records his activities, he felt additional pressure when his work was under scrutiny.
[Field Notes: September 6, 2002]

Another officer related a similar apprehension regarding review from within the police organization and scrutiny by the legal system.

...While we're at work here, you're constantly being judged. *Constantly being judged.* [emphasis his] And the court system is the worst part, right. Every time I testify, I feel like I'm on trial. Every word you say is scrutinized. I find it a little ridiculous. That's one of the things that I always find frustrating with this job. It's not worth it. What's it worth for me to get up and lie about something? Why would I do it? There's nothing for me to gain. [As sure as the] sun's going to come up tomorrow, I'm not going to make shit up.
[Interview: August 12, 2002]

Whitaker (1999) described the early practices of assembly-line production and their influence on workplace surveillance. Factory tasks were closely scrutinized by inspectors in order to develop the most efficient and productive methods of work. Management of work practices became a scientific endeavour. Information technology accelerated the monitoring capabilities of management to assess productivity and work capacity. Because police officers interacted with surveillance technologies on a daily basis (such as Halifax's investigative database), they felt the pressures of information production. As Whitaker observes, "many workers find themselves obliged to run at the speed of the computer network, instead of assembly line" (Whitaker, 1999: 115). This insight captured the realities of the Halifax Regional Police as evidenced in four examples from my field notes.

Each police officer carries a load of investigations that they must conduct on top of the call response role. The officer explained

that everyone is given minor investigations by the shift sergeant, who monitors activity and progress made on each assigned investigation. Officers may also have their daily dispatched calls added to their caseload. He and other officers have complained about their endless cases and often boast about a lower number of investigations, while others groan about an overload.

Each file is assigned a due date that can be extended with reasons or can also be closed after review by the sergeant. Each officer then attempts to resolve their cases, by consistently investigating them, attending to public concerns or by other means. However, in many cases, because of the nature of police shift work, officers can really only advance progress on their investigations when a shift falls on normal (civilian) working hours or day-shifts. In addition, with a shift rotation, officers may have only a few days that are *less* busy where they can complete investigative work.

With investigations, internal accountability is maintained by filing electronic detective activity reports (DACTs), submitted into the sergeant. These reports account for the officer's daily activities, but also serve as a record of what has been completed on each incident or case in the police system.

The officer tells me that he always tries to maintain his 'crypt', as he claims: a good crypt will keep the boss off your back, but also build trust between management and the officer. He tells me, "If the sergeant never has to remind you of your cases, he begins to trust that you do other work as good as your cases."
[Field Notes: August 24, 2002]

From these comments, it was clear that police officers were accountable to their supervisors and subjected to constant audit. They were part of an internal surveillance system that risk managed them and at the same time created stress.

In addition to internal related surveillance pressures, "rhizomatic surveillance" suggests that monitoring goes beyond the institutional. Thus monitoring activity by citizens created stress as illustrated by one officer:

This type of job is a very publicly displayed kind of [occupation], everyone knows what you're up to, what you're doing. We're watched by a lot of people, the public are watching whatever you do and management watches whatever you're doing – [so] there's a lot of people that are observing what you are doing at certain times. You know even as you drive down the street, they always

look at the police car, then when you get out of the car, you really gotta watch. People stop and look.

People video tape, people doing everything, there's television shows with people [watching police]. It's a very observed occupation. What comes with that is the stress of being observed and being judged on what you do... Sometimes you're in places where you're going to be observed, someone's going to watch you and there's no way you're going to win the situation.
[Interview: August 27, 2002]

During one field observation, I witnessed another example of the dispersed nature of surveillance described by Haggerty and Ericson (2000):

One night, two officers were requested to pick up an intoxicated man from the steps of a small apartment building. As the officers talked with the man, I noticed that a neighbour had left his house across the street and approached the curb, holding a digital video camera. The officers turned to look and noticed that the man was recording their interaction with the drunken man. The officers were upset, but ignored the man who blatantly videotaped them from across the street. I was surprised at how quickly the neighbour had emerged from the house with the camera, since the police had arrived on scene without emergency lights.
[Field Notes: August 21, 2002]

The police were frequently in public view. Their uniforms and vehicles attracted attention and created further scrutiny. These external pressures were further compounded by management within their own organization, which controlled the information they produced and used.

Stress from surveillance is a relatively unexplored concept, particularly in police work. Studies have examined stressors that are part of the monitoring system used by police departments, such as performance evaluation and paperwork (Crank and Caldero; 1991). However, no studies have examined how surveillance affects the individual officer and their colleagues. This type of stress was a constant concern, as surveillance stressors contributed to further frustration and cynicism, which as we shall see, developed into resistance as a coping mechanism among police.

Trauma and Related Stressors (Death, Negativity and Helplessness)

Trauma and related stressors were among the more frequently discussed stressors in the secondary literature (Young, 1995; Mitchell, 1996; Brown, et al., 1999; Leonard and Allison, 1999; Violanti and Patton, 1999; Howard, et al., 2000). Traumatic incidents involving injury and death were part of emergency responses and had a lasting effect not only on officers' over time, but on their "guilt, anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, flashbacks and excessive anger "(Leonard, Alison, 1999: 144). Police officers also faced many challenges with "messy" deaths including, murders, accidents, suicides and other traumas (Young, 1995). One officer spoke about trying to maintain emotional composure while on the job:

Well, like fatality accidents – you go and somebody's dead. I went to one where a woman got involved in an argument with her husband, they were drinking at a bar in [an industrial park]. Anyway, she left [the bar] and ran out onto the highway and got smashed [by a truck]. Killed. Pieces of her went in a hundred and fifty directions. And that didn't upset me so much, but what upset me is when he [the husband] came out and found her -- he went nuts. We had to restrain him. Well, I mean there were members [police] there [at the scene] who were crying, there were members there who were laughing...you know everybody has different reactions to it. I didn't do either, I was kinda in the middle of it I guess. But it's just that she died for such a stupid reason.
[Interview: August 12, 2002]

Another spoke of the fatalism of managing death:

The reality of the [work] arises when you run into a situation where there's nothing that you can do. For example, a person gets run over by a car -- a little nine year old girl was run up into the floor boards of a truck and there wasn't a thing...she was still alive and dying, there wasn't a thing that we could do for that child. Couldn't lift the truck off her, couldn't take the tire off fast enough, she was *dying*. And there's not a thing you can do and then you realize that all these powers that I have, just doesn't cut the mustard. You just can't save everybody and then you hurt because of that. [emphasis his]
[Interview: July 10, 2002]

A third officer described the “helplessness” of traumatic situations when they are unable to overcome the physical barriers of space and time:

One night, there was a report of a car going the wrong way out a highway [in a distant part of the district]. On our way out...it wasn't a few seconds later that one of the [district] units just happened upon an accident which was caused by the person that was driving the wrong way on a 100 series highway...the cars were on fire and he was in the process of trying to get the people out of the cars. It was like daylight out there. There was one lady that they had pulled out, she was on the side of the road and there wasn't anybody with her at that point. Of course, our lone guy from work ...he did what he could and there was nothing else to do, so he was standing around and really not doing anything... He was in that place, that place where you just walk around, not really doing anything and his head wasn't really where he probably would have liked it. Again and there's still -- inside the vehicle -- there's still one person in each car. They [the firemen] used their extinguishers and everything that they had and they just couldn't get them out. ...The hardest part is -- even with the dead people all over -- [the victims] are on their way out and you can't help them...you always want to help. When you're that far away and you know that you can't be there to deal with the physical part of [the accident] right away -- it [also] still bothers you that one of your own people is by themselves and having a hard time. And there's nothing you can do because you're not going to be there for some time and you know that during that time, [my coworker] is having a really rough one. It was probably one of the worst times in his whole life, really.
[Interview: August 24, 2002]

Accidents of this order were lasting. They had a considerable effect on the rest of one's career. The close proximity to death and the gravity of someone's death etched these events deeply in memory.

I remember an instance where a nurse was walking down the highway and she got hit by an impaired driver. The impaired driver stopped, got back in his vehicle and took off, leaving the lady there. When I got there, she was crushed, I gave her mouth to mouth -- glass in my mouth -- and she died in my arms. That's overwhelming to me. Then the accused party, the impaired driver got caught when I put the information out -- [he eventually] blew the breathalyzer and got eight months for what he did. There you have a woman that is dead now, that was overwhelming for me.[Interview: September 18, 2002]

Officers also described stress dealing with calls, involving natural and accidental deaths.

Natural deaths were often unexpected and present challenges if the body has been decomposed or changed by exposure to the elements. One officer's experience with accidental death was captured in the following comment:

[One call I went to] she fell asleep in bed while smoking...fire burned was so hot and so intense that it burned itself out in her room. It didn't burn the whole house down, it was black it looked like something out of a Stephen King movie. Like the windows were black, the ceiling was black, the floor, the walls, everything. Her body was laying on the mattress, with all the skin and muscles on from this it was just her skeleton. Knees down it was just the skeleton, the layer of skin was gone – you could just see the muscle and the fatty tissue. She was still crackling when we got there...I've never smelled anything so bad in my entire life...I walked out, I couldn't bear that.

[Interview: September 15, 2002]

Police officers dealt with "unthinkable" scenes similar to morticians or fire and emergency response crews. Despite observing varying levels of death and dying, they nevertheless presented these realities to grieving families and loved ones. Two officers explained:

I went to this one natural death call once that, but when I got there, the daughter and the granddaughter were over the grandmother's body crying and weeping because they were the ones that found them. There was vomit on both sides of her mouth and so it was pretty freaky to look at -- she had her eyes open. When I came in they were yelling at me [to give CPR], it took a little while for me to get through to them that she's gone, she's passed away. At first, it was kinda like that "oh my god" situation. They were just in that much grief that they didn't understand the fact that she was dead and the situation just didn't look good where the vomit was around the mouth. But when you're thrown in those types of situations, its just not normal. That's not what you see everyday, its not what most people see everyday. It's those types of situations that sometimes overwhelm you, the things that you think you'll only see on TV until you actually go on a call.

[Interview: August 18, 2002]

I mean, no one likes to go to someone's house and say, "Hey, your family member was killed in an accident or something like that. Those types of things are always pretty tragic. I would say that's probably one of the only things that I don't like. Those types of things, once again, they're good

people. You're delivering the most tragic news of their lives for those people. That's not pleasant.
[Interview: September 16, 2002]

Officers found it difficult to confront their grief over bereavement and many experienced stress vicariously through others. But the police occupied a unique social position; they had to manage situations beyond the experiences of ordinary citizens. They had the duty of "tidying up" situations that were undesirable or unthinkable to the public (Young, 1995: 151). Police managed death by, "tempering" the truth of trauma and death and restoring normalcy in the public's mind (ibid.). Stress from death and trauma was one of the more frequently studied phenomena in recent years (see Violanti and Patton, 1999). In Chapter Five, I will discuss how officers coped with this onerous task.

The Stress of Social Isolation

You know, I remember saying that when I came on [at Halifax PD], your circle tends to shrink to policemen. I remember thinking at the time that it wasn't going to happen to me. [Nevertheless], you get a lot more comfortable in the police world.
[Interview: July 31st, 2002]

Skolnick (1994) and Reiner (2000) identified two reasons that contributed to the social isolation of police: namely danger and authority. First, Skolnick argued that the dangerousness of police work isolated police from the public, since citizens tend not to participate in maintaining order and security because of the possibility for harm. Second, the authoritative position of police officers also created a rift between citizens and police. One Halifax police officer discussed how this added to stress:

Less than a year on the job, I was walking the beat on [a local street] and I was passing this young guy carrying a baby. The baby was cute [with a] funny grin and no teeth and one of those

silly little hats that babies wear. I love babies ...I'm walking along and the baby is gooing at me like babies do and I'm gooing back at the baby and the guy carrying the baby is like, "What the f%^&you looking at pig? Don't be looking at my kid, he doesn't want to know no f^&*ing pig." The guy's an asshole, I mean he's not representative of the people on [a local street] or anywhere else. But, it's incidents like that that accumulate ... eventually when you're working.
[Interview: July 31st, 2002]

A second officer recounted:

The public really has a negative perspective of us. You could go to a scene of a fire and they're all happy with the fire department putting out the fire in the house, but they're mad at you because you're there re-directing traffic on them and telling them they can't go down the street because there's a fire down there. They hate you, but they like the firemen, [even though] you're doing the same job for the same scene. There's a bit of a negative attitude there with the general public.
[Interview: September 4, 2002]

Police expressed difficulty with social tension created by their position of authority (Reiner, 2000). Citizen-police conflict was an everyday occurrence and not limited to when the officer was in uniform. Confrontations extended to other social situations and contexts. A third officer recalled:

You can talk to a person, but once they've found out that you're a police officer, they look at you differently. I was at the gym about a month ago and I was talking to this guy -- we were just talking back and forth. He asked me what I did, I told him I was a policeman and he walked away. I saw him the next day and he didn't talk to me.
[Interview: October 5, 2002]

These experiences have led officers to carefully manage their interactions with others, even family members. One police officer told how social isolation effected his relations with his family:

[Also, policing] can be difficult and stressful on relationships... because you'll go to a family gathering with your wife and families and sit there like a clown because you don't wanna [get involved]. You're friendly, but [then] you get with a bunch of your buddies and they can't shut you up. You're talking a mile a minute. Then

after the party, you get in the car and your wife says to you, "Man, when I get you with my family you sit there like a bump on a log and you don't say anything..." That feeling of alienation comes with this job and there's no way around it. That's definitely a stressor, because you don't feel as part of the rest of society the most of the time.

[Interview: July 31st, 2002]

For Skolnick (1994), police officers experienced public isolation and struggled with it from the onset of their careers. For some, avoiding confrontation and being isolated had its own price:

[As a police officer,] your social activities will change dramatically. I always suggest to the new guys coming on that "you might as well forget about going downtown to the bars anymore". You get yourself in trouble with something, it's your job, it's your career if you got into a fight off-duty downtown at a bar. Or you turn around and some scumbag that you arrested – [some] Hell's Angel – recognizes you and jabs you in the back while you're amongst all those people...

[Interview: Sept 4, 2002]

Others indicated that the potential for violence while 'off-duty' influences their contact with citizens. Police officers usually exercised caution and guarded their identity carefully. The threat of violence became a reality for a few officers, who were approached by known criminals while off-duty with their families. Social isolation was mainly a result of the authoritative nature of police work. Officers often expressed frustration due to the challenges they faced in social contexts and community involvement. For many officers, social isolation remained a major concern and stressor.

Danger, Violence and Uncertainty as Stress

There is a general sense among the public that police work is dangerous. Dangerousness in police work involves various types of situations, including weapons calls, assaultive suspects, vehicle chases, bar fights, high risk arrests. Many police

officers confirmed this observation and recalled stressful situations that had a high level of risk and danger. One officer described his most significant incident of danger.

Yah, it wasn't too long after I started...it was around Christmas time. I was the initial responding officer in a chase with a large dump truck. I met up with that truck and I saw the truck and of course my reaction was, "Holy shit! Look at the size of that thing." You look at this truck and it was twenty feet high and it took up both lanes of the road almost. So being a rookie, I was on my own for the very first time... I watched it run over one of our [police vehicles]. I knew who was at the intersection, I knew they were there, but I didn't realize at the time that they were outside of the car. I thought that they were still inside the car, so of course, my jaw dropped and once again I said, "Holy SHIT!"...I thought to myself at that time, "Holy crap, this guy is intent on killing someone."

Anyway, it was going to go right into downtown and cause some havoc. I get up front, I get upwards of a quarter of a mile, half a mile ahead – I'm basically playing chicken with people in the on-coming lanes, trying to get them off the road, because of course, they don't know what the hell is going on. So, without literally running them off the road, I'm doing everything I can to force them to the side of the road and keep them there. I came directly in the path of an on coming vehicle till it comes to slow and pull up beside it and yell, "Stay where you're at!" and I continue on to the next vehicle. Every single vehicle I'm looking at is full of kids.

There were a couple of police cars that got ahead of it to slow it down to see if that would slow him down in anyway. But, he still continued on at the same pace – and almost rear ended those cars. So there was nothing you could do to stop this guy, so the shot was taken. That was just passing a nearby university.
[Interview, August 29, 2002]

Exposure to danger had a significant emotional impact on all involved. Often, these kinds of situations combined many stressors, including a fear for public safety, use of a firearm and the possible loss of a colleague. Another police officer described the danger and decisions they considered when facing a suspect brandishing weapons:

I won't forget it because we were just coming around the back of the building when buddy comes running out of the f*^ing house with two big butcher knives and he was covered in blood, head to toe. He come running down the stairs and we were just about to f%^ing shoot him. He was in just a blind rage. He just got beaten over the head with a weight bar by his step-father, he was just flipping. You could see the blood streaming down his face. It was something out of a horror flick is what it was and only on the job for not even a year and it was one of

those situations where you just [thought], 'Oh no! Oh no, oh no!' You're screaming, "Please, drop the knives!" His eyes rolled back and he was running down the stairs at us. Two great big things and we just happened to be standing at the bottom of the stairs – he wasn't coming after us, but he never even saw us. I think he got three steps from the bottom and then he looked up and he froze just like a statue and dropped the knives. He was one step away from getting shot by two policemen.[Interview: September 15, 2002]

Yet, another officer described, a late night vehicle stop that went terribly wrong:

There was one [call] where one of the guys had stopped [someone] for impaired driving and had him in back of his car [police vehicle]. The suspect found out that his truck was going to be towed and he kicked out the window of the car and got a chainsaw out of the back of his truck... He started to rush us -- and I know there was a couple of us that almost started to squeeze a round off -- when he lifted the chainsaw and made a step to come forward, [but] the gas went to the top of the tank and the chainsaw stalled. We ended up jumping on him [instead of shooting him]... That was pretty stressful. Because it was to the point where we knew that we were going to have to kill him... I think we went out the next night and we had a few.
[Interview: September 10, 2002]

However, for police officers, stress wasn't limited to unmistakably dangerous situations, but also to those that had an unknown element of danger. Crank (1998) spoke of the 'uncertainty' of police work, as officers faced unknown dangers with each shift. Awareness about the unpredictability of police work was instilled into officers during their recruit and probationary training and was often analogized as "periods of boredom, punctuated by moments of action that [were] wild and evilly whimsical" (Crank, 1998: 113). As a result, uncertainty presented a unique challenge for police officers and as one officer noted:

I think policing is dangerous when the police cannot predict what may happen. Which could be any situation I guess. Say for instance, a drug raid: When you're dealing with drugs, you're dealing with a lot of money, with weapons and people that obviously have these weapons for a reason. Perhaps not to use them against the police, but to protect their money. So they're around and there are people that wanna use them. So I think one of the more dangerous situations is conducting some sort

of raid or executing search warrants that way. It seems to me to be the more adrenaline type of thing. You don't know what is going on, you're going into a place and may or may not be announcing your entry. So you have to be aware of situations like that."

[Interview: August 23, 2002]

A second officer confirmed the ubiquitous character of unknown danger:

Well, just about everything that you go to is going to be dangerous. I mean even a parking complaint, you never know. You're always thinking the back of your mind the possibilities of just about anything happening. You can go to hundreds of scenarios, but you're trained to think like a police officer at all times and when I'm working, it's always in the back of your mind, you have to be situationally aware at all times. No matter what the call is, you could potentially set yourself up for a dangerous situation. There's always situations where I'd be afraid. Any robberies in progress or bar fights stuff like that. You're always faced with situations where you have to go into large crowds and you never know if that crowd's going to turn on you or something's going to be thrown at you. Or making an arrest and getting kicked in the head from behind, you never know. Or someone pulling a weapon."

[Interview: August 29, 2002]

The dangerousness associated with police work also affected police officers while off-duty. A third officer explained that experiencing crime or victimization in an officer's personal life had impact more often because of the nature of their work and occupational experiences:

If a police officer is the victim of a break and enter, like if you go home and someone tries to kick in the back door, they get frightened ten times more than the average citizen. As panicky as a citizen would go, the police officer would go absolutely wild because..."They're trying to get in because I'm a cop...they're trying to get in, they're going to kill my family." And they go to extremes with it and they get ten times as frightened. When they go out and call 911, they're voices are more panicky than anyone else. But yet at the same time, there's this anger that emerges, "You're going to victimize me?" and that older sibling element comes out with all this courage, they learn to deal with that fear. Look out, you've got a pit-bull on your hands, in a situation like that.

[Interview: July 10, 2002]

Police officers have a unique occupation. Regularly police officers responded to calls avoided by the general public and face danger, threat of life and the unknown. For police officers, the stress of unpredictability, danger and the unknown had a significant

effect on their working personality and social identity. For example, when exposed to danger, police officers developed a honed sense of suspicion that protected them from harm (Skolnick, 1994; Rubenstein, 1973). On and off-duty, police officers indicated that they watched crowds, sat facing doors and openings, exhibiting a constant hypervigilance. Moreover, the threat of danger and unpredictability forced officers to be suspicious on and off-duty.

Harm to Children

If there was a consensus among police officers about one stressor that affects everyone, it was witnessing children that have been seriously injured or killed. One officer described the stress succinctly:

There's times when it's a pretty shitty job though, [there's] times when you deal with kids, dead children -- that's the worst I've found. That's the hardest thing so far, having to deal with that. It's not even a bad thing about policing it's just a negative aspect that is inherent to policing, that's what police officers have to deal with dead things sometimes, sometimes its children -- notifying people that their child has just died, that's a hard thing to do. Its not fun.
[Interview: August 27, 2002]

Another officer added:

Again, I'd come back to little kids. I fear it. [During a training seminar,] we were doing a role-playing kind of thing how we'd react to some kinds of things... Mine was to be the first officer on a scene of a large oil truck or gas truck that collided with a school bus, kids are killed, kids are burning, kids are everywhere. I had to leave the room because I was crying.

Now the thing about this, is that two weeks after that seminar, I had to leave a night time briefing. I was told that a big truck, like [the one from the seminar] had collided with a school bus of children at a bridgehead. No other information came in other than that truck. I was sweating and when I got out of my car, in the dead of winter, such as this was, the sweat froze on me. It felt like I had been standing out in the snow and was snow covered -- sweat was running down my back, my shirt was soaked... When I got out of the car, I realized that it was just a rear end collision, but because there were so many kids involved that they wanted a traffic investigator there to play it safe for measurements. I was petrified. I was trembling driving down the road, trying to drive that police

car as fast as I was. And when I got out of the car I was actually dumbstruck with the fact that I was so scared, but so thankful that this ended up being something very minor. I, to a degree, live with fear of it almost every day.

[Interview: July 12, 2002]

Police officers faced a fear of encountering injured children. Pogrebin and Poole (1991: 402) illustrated this as a highly emotional event and as “universally somber” when children are affected. When children were victims, Pogrebin and Poole found that officers had trouble making sense of these types of events.

Since police officers saw themselves as protectors, situations with children challenged the core of their identity. Two officers described how they often identified with grieving family members especially if they had children of their own:

...Sudden deaths of any kind: You go to an infant death, like a S.I.D death, and they die in a crib. Or you go to any type of accident where somebody has died before their time -- those can be the most overwhelming, because we're human beings ... when somebody's just lost a father or a mother or son or daughter and its hard to do what you have to do because you feel their pain. I can empathize with them, because I automatically project myself. My god, if I came home and this happened in my family, how bad would I be feeling? Those kinds of situations are overwhelming.

[Interview: July 31, 2002]

I attended a call for a three month old baby that was found not breathing overnight by the parents. Myself and another officer went to the call and the baby was from all intensive purposes dead on-scene...This was a very stressful situation – trying to deal with that baby – it was a horrible scene because the parents are in the background screaming and crying and we're trying to do CPR on a baby which is difficult as it is...it eventually died at the hospital. My baby was about the same age. It really affected me, I thought, 'Wow, this could be anyone, this could be me.' That's horrible, you do everything you can to try to save it, you almost save it. You a-l-m-o-s-t save it. It was the strangest kind of feeling the world. It was still the worst call I've ever been on yet, was when the baby died. [Interview: August 27, 2002]

I noticed an officer's difficulty with injured children after a ridealong, while meeting with two officers in the briefing room, when one officer stated after prompting

that “the people (victims)... are stressful,” then adds seriously, “Well, last week was a bit stressful with that kid.” [Field Notes: August 24, 2002] The officer was referring to a highly publicized incident where police had responded to a drowning 13 year-old at a nearby swimming area. This officer had been first on the scene attempting a rescue. It was clear that the drowning had affected the officer and even more significantly when mentioning the incident to an ‘outsider’. Situations involving children were difficult and required sensitive coping among police. I was told that similar situations involving adults may be open to cultural coping (e.g. gallows humor), but incidents of harm to children were solemn events that appear to be internalized more than externalized.

Additional Stressors

A number of other stressors were also reported by police officers as seen earlier in Table 1. Officers spoke of their frustration with the public complaints process, one that caused apprehension among officers. One officer explained it this way:

I don't think there's another job out there where people are encouraged and there's a process in place for complaints...There's pamphlets about 'how to complain about a police officer'. There's an encouragement to do that. It's a bit of an annoyance. [Interview: September 4, 2002]

Similarly, others expressed problems with public scrutiny of their job, particularly with media organizations and their interpretations of police work. In describing the stress caused by media reports, one officer stated:

I read something in [the local newspaper]... and they're so factually inaccurate and so biased ...you have to swallow a lot of that in this job because you read it and you wanna reply, but you can't because of the nature of the job. Things like that can be really frustrating, the more that I'm on the job, actually the less I read the newspaper or watch the news. [Interview: July 27, 2002]

Given that there was a highly publicized job, some officers found ‘misinformed’ comments from the general public caused them some difficulty – often in situations

where they had to 'justify' their actions to onlookers. One officer described how police use of force was often put under a microscope by the public:

[Some] negative things are comments from the public or the media or somebody who doesn't know exactly what we're doing in a certain situation, but [they] have drawn their own conclusions about that situation and about the police role and what the police have done.

People may not be familiar with police procedures and they may see something as being brutality, perhaps three or four officers trying to arrest one person. That may look like excessive force, but in reality it is four people try to subdue one person so nobody gets hurt. But you know, people sometimes don't see that – they just see four police jump on small person instead of one officer [dealing with it]. [Interview: August 23, 2002]

Patrol policing is a twenty-four hour responsibility or duty. Officers therefore engaged in shift work to provide adequate daily coverage. Working shift-work produced a host of problems to the officer involved, including family and relationship problems, loss of sleep, change in attitude, to name a few. The difficulties with shift-work were stressors for some officers:

[Shift] workers and people that don't work shift work...in the same household. [That can be a problem, because] some people have never worked all night long and don't realize that if you've worked all night long you sleep a little longer than some people. I know that speaking with some fellow officers, there have been some problems at home and in relationships...I try to get a nap in the afternoon and then try and get a good sleep in between my night shifts. If I didn't, that would impact me at work ... You want to be on top of your game, you want to get a good sleep. [Interview: August 23, 2002]

Another officer commented:

Well, shift work has its pros and cons... [such as] Christmas and that you don't get to be home.
[Interview: August 25, 2002]

Police officers explained that shift work distances themselves from family and home. Emergency service occupations and shift workers often missed regular holidays that citizens come to expect. In fact, some officers felt that shift work was the most

difficult part of their job. During a field observation session, I was in the booking area listening to a few officers talk about the job. One officer became interested when asked about stress and stated that shift-work was one of the major stressors for himself and others. He indicated shift work caused physiological conflicts, such as lack of sleep, irritability, loss of appetite and apathy. The officer argued that awkward hours and shifting was a major contributor to troubled home lives and lifestyle habits.

Although additional stressors of media relations, public scrutiny, police complaints process and shift work were not widely reported by patrol officers, these stressors remain a significant concern for some officers. These additional stressors are less obvious to some officers, but they enhanced the impact of other serious stressors such as trauma, social isolation or danger. This was illustrated to me when one officer joked about experiencing 'danger' at work. He told me that "it's not the dangerous call that bothers me, it's not being able to find a stapler at the office when I'm doing paperwork for the dangerous call." It was important to understand that additional stressors sometimes interacted with others, causing more potential difficulty for officers to cope with police work.

Conclusion

My findings suggest that surveillance-related stressors remained a significant influence on police officers. The prevalence of surveillance-related pressures was consistent with recent research that suggested organizational demands (paperwork, supervisors, etc) have overtaken stressors resulting from response call incidents (see Crank and Caldero, 1991; Patterson, 1999). These findings were relatively unreported in the literature. Often, studies have discussed the relationship between people and varying surveillance apparatuses, but little (if any) had discussed the effect of these

practices on people. As described by officers in Halifax, surveillance and monitoring may be covert in means, but have overt consequences for those involved.

However, incidents of trauma and social isolation remained a consistent concern, due to the frequency and emotional gravity of these events. Officers faced situations of dying, death and trauma and continued with their daily tasks despite the stress from these events. They managed these situations by using gallows humor, solidarity and communication, which I will now discuss in Chapter 5 as part and parcel of the context of coping behavior of police officers. My focus will be on elements of culture that function to relieve stress, such as communication, interaction, values and lore.

Chapter Five: Police Culture and Coping with Stress

Work culture was an important aspect of the job environment. In policing, the working culture of officers provided direction and substance that enabled daily activities. Workers received social and communal support, necessary for their well-being. It was also an enabling resource, one that helped manage the day-to-day problems of the occupation. Elements of culture, as described earlier, were inter-related and collectively contributed to an officer's coping ability. For example, in policing, communication conveyed lore and values to police officers, who, in turn, used these foundations of culture to guide their social interactions and ameliorate stress. Moreover, when considering stress, these elements acted alone or in concert to facilitate coping among police. Thus, an officer's storytelling and humorous interaction often worked concurrently to relieve stress. One officer put it this way:

After something that is significant has happened, the next day you come to work and people are sitting around talking about it...You personally may feel in a way – "jeez, that's kinda crazy." But when you listen to your friends and your colleagues saying, "Wow, [that was something yesterday]" [and then you realize] someone else feels that way too. It makes you a little more comfortable.
[Interview: September 16, 2002]

As exemplified in the above quote, cultural elements have a palliative role in stress management. In this chapter, I identify how work cultural elements of communication, interaction, lore and values influence coping with stress, as reported by Halifax Regional Police officers. I provide data that demonstrates the significant involvement of work culture in stress management. Whether coping had positive or negative origins, work culture remained a critical facilitator when dealing with the difficulties of police work.

Communication

Culture was constructed through oral traditions such as talk, jokes and storytelling (Bayley and Bittner, 1984; Brewer, 1990; Ericson and Shearing, 1991). Stories spread the shared wisdom of experienced officers and were employed with anecdotes, asides, after-call narratives, banter and “show and tell” sessions, continuing the traditions of police culture (Ericson and Shearing, 1991). These types of communication were also a means to ease stress by informing others of difficulty, objectifying personal feelings about an event or simply participating in the collective culture of storytelling. Many officers described how talk eased the difficulties of the job. One put it bluntly:

If you're dealing with th[ese] [difficulties] all the time and its somehow affecting you or your life, you should do something about it -- whether if it is talking to your spouse, talking to somebody from employee assistance. Talk to a friend, get it off your chest.
[Interview: August 23, 2002]

Another reaffirmed the value of this dictum:

I think that you just deal with [stressful situations] again, by talking to other people involved in it... you go to an interesting call. Twenty minutes later – you go for coffee or come back to the station and everyone's talking about it. It's amazing how it all plays out here. I think a lot gets solved that way.
[Interview: September 16, 2002]

At Halifax, the primary location for talk and story-telling was the booking area. When an offender was charged or held over for court, they were brought to the cells and booked in a common area. Police used the time between booking and paperwork to chat with other officers. The following excerpt from my field notes captured the significance of this site:

One officer indicated how the arrest took place, recounting the story of her foot chase with the offender, adding that a partner had joined soon after she had apprehended the offender. Colleagues chastised her about the radio talk during the apprehension – claiming that it sounded like she had been struggling and needed help with the offender. One officer exclaimed, “They were getting noise complaints down the road due to the radio chatter!” Others discussed the reaction from the victim’s father. They explained that at the scene, the victim’s father became panicky and argued with the police refusing to calm down, yelling “Don’t touch me, don’t touch me!” The police warned his wife that he would be “taken for a ride to the cells” if he continued his behavior. One of the officers claimed that the father had been “seconds away from being charged with a breach of the peace”.

[Field Notes: August 20th, 2002]

I noticed that the officers expressed frustration at the father’s affront and used repeated talk to express their concerns. This conversation involved those already at booking and those who arrived afterward. In the above example, talk enabled officers to ‘vent’ with fellow police and share experiences about the arrest. For example, prior to the foot chase, the officers had encountered an unruly citizen and had to deal with his challenge to their competence. After the arrest, the officers coped with stress by communicating and reaffirming their cultural identity. As Ericson and Shearing (1991) noted, stories like these acted as “precedents to action”. They were practical and enabled social practices to continue.

Talk and story-telling also occurred on patrol. Officers would seek out colleagues and exchange stories about workplace events and personal issues of concern. Officers met behind buildings, in parking lots, on dead-end roads, in rail yards and other isolated areas to share experiences and conversation. In some instances, computer and radio technologies facilitated talk between officers in police vehicles. Although limited in length, radio interaction often used police anecdotes to explain an event. Police anecdotes held significance among police as relatable stories of

commonly understood concerns (Shearing and Ericson, 1991). One officer recounted an experience to me:

01:03 – The radio chatter began with the dispatcher, who checked the status of an officer involved in a domestic call. The officer responds saying, “Everything’s ok, but she’s way past quarter after ten.” The officer was referring to the complainant, who was thought to be mentally unstable and reported that there were alien invaders in the upstairs apartment. The dispatcher and officers were made aware that all was well, but not without difficulty. Others responded using computer instant messages telling jokes and teasing the officer about his situation.
[Field Notes: August 29, 2002]

Computer technology had also enabled officers to communicate with colleagues regardless of their physical location. Using laptop computers, officers communicated across districts within a city, and in a few cases, between police agencies in the province. As a result, communication was no longer limited to face-to-face interaction. Communication was assisted by computer technology. Officers shared text messages, emails and discussions in formats that were unrestrictive of location, time and place via laptop computers and other portable communication equipment such as pagers and cell phones. In my observations, officers used in-car computers, cell phones and pagers to facilitate ‘canteen’ meetings during the shift where banter and talk took place.

Furthermore, the ‘canteen’ in ‘after-work’ or ‘off-duty’ environment -- was well documented as a setting for storytelling and backstage antics (Pogrebin and Poole, 1990; Fielding, 1995). This certainly applied to stress and coping in my research. Whether at a coffee shop, pool hall or party, officers used talk to relate their experiences of stress with others. One officer noted:

You may call your best friend and a couple of buds and go up to the Tim Horton’s somewhere and you’ll talk about it. “Jeez, boy that guy smelled, man, what a sight!” You talk about it, you get it off your chest. You don’t internalize... I always do my best and ensure that I talk about the good stuff at home.
[Interview: July 16th, 2002]

Another described a stressful arrest that was later retold at a party as a comical experience.

That's the way of dealing with a stressful call. It becomes funny... The danger...what was dangerous before, now becomes laughable. Lots of things like that happen. Things that were dangerous turn into something that was funny. How you're driving somewhere in a high-speed chase and you catch someone and it turns out to be a [young] girl. It's funny. The war stories...and usually it's told either because it's some kind of thing that you've done well and you let them have credit for it or its [humorous]. It's either a dangerous thing that you're telling people because you did well – or you're making fun of yourself – or a victim, bad guy, making fun of someone. Making fun of somebody usually. [Interview: August 26, 2002]

These accounts illustrated three crucial points about the relationship between storytelling and coping with stress. First, stories helped objectify stressful experiences. Perspectives were announced and exchanged so as to facilitate understanding with others. These stories expressed emotion, but in a 'safe' manner and other officers identified with them. A third officer related it to me as follows:

The officer explained how he thought that he had been shot, but had only been splattered with his partner's blood. He talked with a colleague about his experience and explained how he had recovered from it. He mentioned his return to work at 'investigative call-back' and explained that on his first day, he was working so hard that he did all his tasks within three hours and had nothing to do for the rest of the day. The supervisors said he should stretch out the work to make it last -- he laughed and explained that he didn't realize that the position was to ease him into the job, rather than work excessively on his first few days after returning to work. The officer mentioned that "investigative call-back is a godsend for officers". He explained that his partner would be coming back soon and would probably start doing the same job for her first week at work.

[Field notes: September 4th, 2002]

This officer retold the story and relayed feelings and emotions about coping with tragedy. At the time, the officer's comments generated discussion and interest among those present. In this fashion, a group conversation about coping shared common knowledge in a practice that was safe and appropriate within the police culture. Officers

shared their experiences and stories to invoke personal experiences in their audience, who instantly understood the situation that was being discussed. This spared officers the need to discuss personal feelings. In these situations, stories expanded and continued among participants.

Second, stories and anecdotes formed lessons that taught others and spread cultural knowledge about coping behavior. As teaching tools, they chronicled remedies and provided learning experiences for novices. As Ericson and Shearing (1991: 490) note, an example of anecdotal teaching occurred after a late night bar fight. Teaching was expressed through “parables played out in living narratives -- the ‘experience’ cited by police officers”. Novices were retold their experiences and were taught how to ‘see’ the world of policing. They were also encouraged to keep safety and suspiciousness close at hand so as to avoid stressful events.

After the arrests had been made and the offenders were ‘booked’, the officers returned to their briefing room to finish paperwork. While copying reports, those involved confronted a rookie officer about how the situation was handled. The story was retold to other police present in the room and chastised the rookie officer for arriving on the scene alone. Officers talked about the arrests that followed, but cautioned her, claiming that she could “get her lip knocked off” or “punched in the mouth” by going solo into dangerous calls. In this case, story-telling confirmed the challenging arrests made at the bar, but also rebuked an inexperienced officer for improper decision making.
[Field notes: July 18th, 2002]

Finally, stories and talk provided support when dealing with stress. Officers communicated stories and engaged in casual talk to help other members in crisis. Communication between colleagues broke the tension brought on by a grim event. One officer described how they had helped a colleague cope with a disturbing event:

So you have to snap [them] out of it [by talking about everyday things] such as, you know...in the middle of a conversation, “You going to that golf tournament this Saturday?” “Yah, I am.” -- while there’s a dead body in front of you. “Yah I’m gonna go this weekend and its going to be pretty cool. Did you sign up for it?”

You get into another conversation like a couple of baseball players. That's what they talk about during the time outs, when the catcher goes up and talks to the pitcher. "By the way, Sally's having a barbecue, why don't you come over and bring the kids over." That's what they're really talking about, they're snapping it off. Look the guy's having a hard time, [let's] talk about something else and come back to [what's at hand].
[Interview: July 10, 2002]

Stories and talk were critical elements of the police environment. They instructed about stress coping, shared stressful experiences with others and reinforced cultural attitudes between members. Culture was thus continued and instilled through stories. Officers learned new cultural methods, habits and skills through communication. Stories were also support-oriented. Officers recognized the difficulties of others and related their own experiences as a form of assistance. Stories and talk among police often incorporated humorous experiences. Next, we visit the role of humor in coping with stress.

Interaction

Humor

According to police theorists, humor was a "symbolic resource through which social meanings are created" (Pogrebin and Poole, 1988: 184). It served as a "strategic tool" that created cultural limits, enhanced solidarity among officers, reinforced 'in-group' understandings and knowledge, and enabled officers to cope with events that are unpredictable or difficult (Pogrebin and Poole, 1988: 184). The majority of subjects ranked a 'good sense of humor' as essential in navigating the difficulties and stress inherent in police work. One officer explained:

I think that the one common identity of police officers is humor. You'll get a lot of humor when dealing with situations, regardless of how serious you think a situation is. It seems like a lot of officers including myself, use humor to overcome painful things that they must deal with, things that they must see and so on. It's just another coping mechanism that they would use to deal with a

job like this. Firefighters and paramedics all have the same type of situations [in their job]. When you're in and amongst a field like this, humor is definitely one aspect that we all share.
[Interview: August 18, 2002]

In coping with stress, police humor took three forms: gallows humor, 'audience degradation' and pranks and practical jokes.

Gallows humor was the playful treatment of tragedy, in an attempt "to transform crises ... into ones that are less threatening and thus more tolerable" (Pogrebin and Poole, 1988: 184). In police work, it was often used to cope with socially negative situations that involve trauma, death or tragedy. Pogrebin and Poole (1988: 199) put it succinctly:

To an outsider, the jokes that are told to diffuse tragedy may not seem humorous at all. In fact, they can be perceived as cruel and insensitive; however, for patrol officers the callousness of such jokes actually helps lessen the emotional intensity elicited by tragic events. In this way, humor allows the police to handle situations that would normally paralyze others.

My field research observations and interviews were full of examples that confirmed the play on the tragic. One officer recalled:

It's like a guy that jumped onto a train and [died from the fall]. Somebody called in, said we have a dead body on top of the train... [The] sergeant came on scene, crawled up on top of the train and walked over and looks at me and says, "Geez, you think he fell off the bridge?" I said, "Well, I don't know, he could have. Cause well, its funny, look at the blood trail on coming down the side of the train. Its looks like the train might have been moving... wind caused that angle of the blood trail. If he fell off the bridge and he only moved about five hundred yards, the blood would have gone straight down, that train had to have been moving." So he says, "Yah, ok." So automatically we go into [the investigation] and we're looking at all these little elements, and he's standing there looking at the body he goes, "It appears that his body, landed here. But it ended up five feet away here." He was pointing at these two different spots. So I looked at him and said, "Well, he must have been a Czechoslovakian." He says, "What?" I say, "You know, "Checks bounce. Ha ha ha." He loved it and goes, "Get away from my crime scene you fool."
[Interview: July 12, 2002]

Another officer related this experience and put into perspective how they approached traumatic scenes:

I remember a suicide call I had gone to recently. An apartment superintendent had committed suicide...we [had] called the detectives... [and] they wanted to look at the scene. 'Ident' was going through its thing and when the detectives came [I showed them around]. I said, "Ok, look. Here's the body. Here's the shot gun. You can see where the metal of the barrel is flexed, he obviously put it in his mouth. His brains are blown all over the place. And then I said, "He was the apartment superintendent." He [the detective] says, "Well how do you know that?" "Well, come here." So I took him over by the window ledge and looked out the window. You know along the side of the concrete walls, they usually have this embutement sticking out, like a rain trough or usually a flat piece of a concrete outside of a window, maybe three or four feet down from the window? I said [to the detective], "Take a look there." His eye ball was lying there. "He's the apartment superintendent, he wants to keep an eye on the building." And now, that was funny as hell. We laughed like crazy. The ident guy and detectives lost it.
[Interview: July 10, 2002]

The officer continued on and reflected on the role of jokes and trauma:

So, it's that dark humor that snaps you out of the negativity element, that snaps you out of it long enough so that you can laugh and [say], "Now, lets get back down to business." And when you get back down to business, you are now capable of focusing in a broader sense, rather than focusing on one little issue. Now you're capable of looking at it from a total picture, rather than narrowing it down and missing something... That is the benefit of being able to *symbolically* divert yourself from [the] moment, from that intensity and being able to come back again to your reality. [emphasis mine]
[Interview: July 10, 2002]

Being able to 'symbolically' remove oneself from traumatic situations was significant.

Police used humor to overcome shock, normalize awful events and return to routines

(Pogrebin and Poole, 1988; Young, 1995). Officers typically described gallows humor

as "taking the edge off" so as to allow distance to deal with death and negativity.

Gallows humor also enabled officers to place “significance” on particular stressful events, without jeopardizing their self image (Pogrebin and Poole, 1988). Humor, like communication, was a way of expressing difficulty that was appropriate for the police culture. Here was how one police officer described it:

I guess in some ways all we do here is we giggle about the funny parts of things. We try and talk about things and [realize] that other people are still on the same wavelength ... they're touching on something that probably really made them uncomfortable or bothered them. They still [talk about it], [but] they just do it indirectly. By talking about the humorous part of it, we all get to do that little 'giggle'. [We're] brought back to that time [of the incident] and probably a little comfortable knowing that at least it was something of significance for them [as well] -- in that it [should be remembered]. [Interview: August 24, 2002]

Gallows humor was a way of connecting with others, and when used, enabled one to express stress without the embarrassment of becoming overly emotional at work. It deflected tragedy in order to allow police officers to continue with their work. Coping with tragedy often involved finding comic relief to restore a sense of normalcy and regularity to the job.

A second type of humor used to manage stress was “audience degradation” (Pogrebin and Poole, 1988: 195). This involved mocking citizens and “teaching” offenders to respect police authority. The ‘booking’ area was the primary site of this humor (Goffman, 1959) and was often used when suspects just arrived. Officers took opportunities to voice opinions about the arrests with colleagues and/or offenders. Officers also usually told jokes or performed antics during searches of suspects. I recorded one such incident while waiting in the booking area:

After a drug arrest, one officer responded to an offender’s offensive behavior with a short performance. He asked the offender, “Wanna see me dance?” The officer began to dance and did a shuffle in front of the booking counter. The other officers laughed and applauded the display, recognizing that he had hoped to chide the unruly prisoner. [Field Notes: October 5, 2002]

Objects in the booking area also assisted in jokes against prisoners:

Along the far left wall of the booking area is a large wooden shelving unit used to hold the property of prisoners while they stay in the jail. Above the unit is a Wilson soccer ball, decorated much like the ball from the movie 'Castaway', with bloody hand print and tufts of straw hair on the top. At times when prisoners are misbehaving, the officers chastise them and refer to the ball, saying "'Wilson' watching!" or making another joke at the expense of the prisoner. Most prisoners were left wondering what the laughing between officers was about.

[Field Notes: Sept 28, 2002]

Once the offenders were placed in cells, humorous comments and stories continued afterward. Officers often reviewed the events, picking out amusing aspects of each call. In one instance, after they struggled to place an unruly offender in the cell, officers joked about the suspects physical condition (6'2" 350lbs) and "wookie" (Star Wars character) appearance. Joking and story-telling continued with anyone that arrived at the booking area. Not only was it entertainment for most employees but it was used as a collaborative method for officers to release stress of the arrest. The following incident recorded in my field notes demonstrated this:

We arrive at the headquarters and the officers pull the van up to the booking area. Officer C and D lead the man they had just arrested to the booking area of the station. While walking to the entrance door, we see another police van that had been parked nearby the entrance. Four or five officers are standing chatting around the back of the van. An audible "bang" can be heard from inside the wagon. The officers laugh and are unconcerned. One of the officers says to Officer C, "Yah, she (a female officer) pissed him off!" After booking their prisoner, Officer C and D exit the booking area and head outside (from which some noise was heard earlier). I see a man in his late 40s lying on the ground face down and handcuffed. Officers are standing around him. Officers C and D laugh and ask, "What happened?" The officers joke that they faked using the tazar on the prisoner and were watching him on the ground, acting out his injury. As we left, the female officer was joking to the sergeant, "Is that a tazar in your pocket or are you just happy to see me?" I heard the sergeant laugh as I followed the officers to the vehicle. Officer D says to me, "No stress in this job! They're having fun with him!" The other adds, "That man has been 'served and protected'." They tell me

the man usually has “no trouble finding a face to spit on” and is a frequent cause of trouble. As we drive away, I see that their colleagues are still congregated near the entranceway, waiting for the prisoner to calm down.

[Field Notes: August 10, 2002]

In another event, a prisoner was brought in for processing during a busy Saturday night, where many officers and prisoners were waiting in the booking area.

A young man, in his early twenties, is brought to booking by two officers and placed in the waiting area. He is extremely drunk and largely unresponsive to anything, let alone the police officer's commands. While puking into the bucket, the officers bent down to tease him saying, “Have you had a good time or what?” Eventually, after readying him for a holding cell, one of the officers asks for a Polaroid camera. It is retrieved and the officer says, “Hey look here for a second.” The man lifts his head and the officer takes a picture of him. The room erupts with laughter! Finally, they take the man to his cell while others wait for the picture to develop. After it is finished, they congregate, looking at the ‘mug shot’. One of the officers writes on the picture border, “Shoe box greetings courtesy of Halifax Regional Police.” Another officer adds, “He’s got Hallmark written all over him!” The photographer then places the photo in the man’s bag of property. Laughter continues for a while as people return to their paperwork and other duties.

[Field Notes: August 20, 2002]

Here, “audience degradation” was used as a group response to stressful events, including monotonies and ‘social negativities’ encountered on a shift. While this type of humor appeared distasteful, it reinforced the common experiences between officers, involving on the job challenges. One officer described to me how they managed repetitive trouble from “regulars”:

The officer describes a night shift where he had seen the ‘frequent customer’ (homeless man) walking in the street and pushing a cart full of recycling cans and bottles. The officer approached the homeless man from behind, slowly creeping closer with the police car. As he was directly behind him, the officer flashed his emergency lights and ‘chirped’ the siren. Apparently, the man was spooked and surprised as he hadn’t heard the car. The officer claimed he had done this three or four times in the span of an hour and laughed each time at the man’s

surprise. The fourth time, the homeless man threw his arms up in the air spilling his cart of recyclables. The officer said to me: "that story you have to picture with me laughing so much [that] I'm crying." "Part of a coping mechanism," he indicated to me. Finding humor in the monotony of work.

Later in the night, I notice the officer starts 'chirping' his siren at drunks walking around town, lovers kissing on benches, pedestrians, attractive women, etc. I notice the startled reactions of people on street (who usually laugh after they see him laughing).

[Field Notes: August 26, 2002]

Audience degradation not only enabled 'teaching' others but allowed for an informal police punishment to take place. Punishment was meant to reinforce the perception of police control, among members of the public particularly when a situation is stressful. By degrading the public and suspects, police officers demonstrated their infallibility and emphasized the bonds between colleagues. Similar to findings by other researchers (Poegrebin, Poole, 1988; Van Maanen, 1978), police responded to the stress caused by citizen confrontations. Shared humor strengthened police in-group solidarity. By degrading the confrontational public, officers sought protection in maintaining status of their own ranks.

Finally, the police resorted to pranks and practical jokes. Pranks were played on constables, supervisors, dispatchers and others to 'lighten' the mood between officers, especially during nights with low call volume. A few officers explained the nature of their gags on co-workers:

Everybody at some point gets picked on. You'll find a humorous thing will be done to you, crack a joke or something. They just tease, tease, tease. You know you do something stupid, you \$%^& up or something and the boys will catch you sleeping in the car in the middle of the park. They'll come over and block out all your windows or something like that – you'll sleep through right through the night – they'll unscrew the antenna so you're not receiving anything [on the radio]. There's crap happening and they're looking for you [dispatcher's frantic voice], "We're missing a car!"

[Interview: September 4, 2002]

Practical jokes maintained a humorous atmosphere at work among officers. However, in some instances, they also served as 'teaching tools'. They informed officers of improper methods of dealing with stress caused by frustration and boredom on the job. A physical prank that took place after an officer had attended a frustrating call was illustrative of this point:

Anyway, I come back in [to the station] and somebody was joking about it [the call] with me and I just wasn't in the mood to hear it. I was just like, "F-off and leave me alone." Later, they came up and they got liquid soap from the dispenser all over the window, the door, all over the door handle, the switches, everything in the truck. So we went, my partner and I, to jump in open the door at the same time...we both looked at our hands, rubbed our fingers together and thinking, "What the hell was that? Ah, it must be the pop that I spilled on the truck." Anyway, long story short, we found out it was soap. The guys that I said, "F-off, I'm not in the mood to joke with" had soaped the entire van just to say, "Alright, you won't tell me to @\$%# off, junior – when we joke about something, you better laugh at what I'm doing here."

[Interview: August 12, 2002]

Senior officers, sensing his frustration, taught the rookie a lesson in cultural coping.

Teaching through practical jokes reinforced the police beliefs about dealing with stress in an appropriate manner. At other times, pranks were used during what was normally a tense situation or a heightened alert as recorded in my field observations:

In one instance, two night shift officers were searching for suspects in a wooded area. The officers had separated, deciding to search areas of the woods with flashlights. I stayed near a pathway, watching the two beams of light search the wooded area. One of the officers finished his search early and came up next to me. "Watch this..." he told me, pointing at the other officer's light in the woods. I watched intently as he threw stones into the woods on either side of the officer, who quickly turned his light, thinking the suspects were moving nearby. The other officer turns his flashlight to look a few times, but eventually catches his partner tossing the rocks. "Stop it man!" he says jokingly, shutting off his light.

[Field notes: September 13, 2002]

Like audience degradation, pranks allowed officers to cope with the boredom of the job.

One officer described a colleague's prank on another public service worker:

I know a police officer did this one time. Funny as all hell. Met him for the first time about fifteen years ago, when patrolling a business park. [In southern accent] "You know something, it doesn't make sense, that the fire department gets to sleep, when we gotta stay awake all night long. Funny isn't it." "Yah it is." So away I drive and about a half an hour later, I hear him say [on the radio], "Dispatch, you better call the fire department out here. There's one of these dumpsters on fire out here. Don't know how the thing caught on fire." I know how it caught on fire, it's because this police officer's got a warped sense of humor. "I think I'm going to wake up those firemen." That's what he did. And it's funny -- it's hilarious. And here comes the fire department, all these guys [come out] rubbing their eyes and putting out the fire. "How'd that catch on fire?" (says the fireman.) "I just don't know, spontaneous combustion I guess." [Interview: July 10, 2002]

Whether by making light of a traumatic scene, poking fun at troublesome citizens or playing practical jokes on each other, humor was a significant source of stress relief within the police culture. Many officers consistently argued that a sense of humor was an attribute most desired in a co-worker – and often defined 'a good police officer'. Humor therefore acted as coping for officers but also remained a crucial element of culture.

Solidarity

Officers who experienced stress also depended upon police "solidarity" for coping. The experiences of policing lead officers to develop closer ties and reinforced support from within their own ranks (Skolnick, 1994; Manning 1997). In their working environment, officers expressed comfort in knowing that other members were in the same "leaky-lifeboat", experiencing similar stressors and facing their difficulties collectively. Patrol officers claimed that social bonds between colleagues were strengthened by stressful events. One officer afforded this account:

We're just all in the same boat. We're all in the same kind of structure. Sometimes management puts things on you and the public sees you in a certain way, so we're all in the same boat and we all know that. That kind of puts you in a certain group as it is. But then, *the bonds are formed in the stressful times*. [For example,] when you go to calls with someone and you have to deal with a family who just lost their son or you have to jump in the water and save a boy who's drowning and he ends up dying on you. You and your partner and whoever you're with, you go through that together and that forms a bond ...It forms a good bond even though it's a negative situation. When you live and go through things like that, you can't help it...you're in an unusual circumstance that most people aren't in that circumstance together – you do it almost weekly here, almost daily at times. I can probably think of every stressful time and who was with me. [The bond] is reinforced constantly because you're with the same people sometimes over and over again.
[Interview: August 24, 2002]

By experiencing stress together, police officers forged strong bonds between co-workers. In police work, social bonds and support were keys to stress reduction and coping. Another officer described how a graphic accident was only manageable with the social support from colleagues:

It's very very common, you're at one of these scenes with your buddies and he goes by (and it's kinda an informal thing) and he says, "Geez, you know, this is f#\$%^ed up huh?" I'd respond, "Yah this is f#\$%^ed up. How you doing? You ok?" "Yah, I'm good." "You?" "Good." ...and if you're not ok, we're not so tough or hard that you can't say, "Jeez, you know, this is bad man. I don't wanna stand here beside this body anymore." They'll say, "Oh, I'll do it. You go do my traffic for me." Because that same guy, if it comes to a fist fight with four or five criminals and he's in the middle, you're trying to climb over somebody's back to get into it. So I've been on both sides of the role. [You could have] the guy you're working with go..."Eeeeh, ehhh. You ok?" I've had guys call me when I'm on the scene, [or] eight hours after the call and you're going to a movie with your wife or girlfriend and somebody will call and say, "How you doin?"
[Interview: July 31st, 2002]

Police officers discussed similar 'debriefing' sessions that occurred outside the workplace environment, in coffee shops, weight rooms and bars. One of my informants re-iterated their therapeutic value:

On a more probably street level thing, day to day, there is an informal kind of thing that happens, just between colleagues. When something like that would happen, I'd probably call a friend of mine and talk about it on the phone. Meet him for coffee and talk about what happened. We'll just talk about the call. What happened, "Oh yeah, well, I think I would do it too..." that kind of thing. It makes the call itself become not a big incident. It takes away from the emotions of it. It helps the person deal with it better."

[Interview: August 24, 2002]

Others described how they coped with the socially isolated or "alienated" nature of their occupation. Maintaining a strong in-group culture, officers surrounded themselves with colleagues at social events and gatherings. Two officers noted the following benefits of a tight-knit work group:

We have to live a very secluded life in that we have to be aware of where we're going, who we're talking to, who we're socializing with because it could come back to haunt us. That's why we have tendency to be with each other in times [where] we want to relax.
[Interview: September 18, 2002]

Your whole social scheduling changes. Outings will be very controlled and [you'll have] mediocre parties. They'll never get out of hand, there'll never be a bunch of drunks hanging around – its more sitting around having a few beers on the back deck [rather] than with strangers – or you'll get together with just police. Different agencies, different organizations share customs, but it'd just be police and hanging out with that kind of crew.
[Interview: September 4, 2002]

During my field work, I observed that police felt most comfortable at a bar when a group of other officers were present. On one occasion, they took control of a bar by discouraging other patrons from entering. Their sheer numbers and ruckus joking behavior kept others at a distance. Officers retold stories and jokes about the bar party.

The social event was a source of common understanding and built cohesion in the group.

Police officers forged social bonds from trauma and depressing scenes and the negative encounters with citizens that were endemic to police work. For most officers, the collective engagement in a stress-laden work environment created strong associations between co-workers and reinforced the police group. Officers relied on the police group for a sense of security in knowing that stressful times were shared and a collective sense of coping with these events was prevalent. As a result, solidarity and social support created a shared, everyday atmosphere for coping with the challenges of policing.

Authority and Informal Justice (Violence)

Westley (1970) and Van Maanen (1978) analysed the police officer's use of street justice to manage physical danger and threats to their authority as police. Officers managed these threats, which are seen as disrespectful to their role. Police officers responded to unruly citizens with a "remedy" that restored the respectability and image of authority held by police (Van Maanen, 1978: 173). One remedy involved "castigating" the offender and using "extra-legal" means to effect a resolution to the threatening citizen (ibid: 173). But, challenges and threats of danger and violence were also significant stressors for police, as discussed in Chapter Four. Officers managed these difficulties often on the spot. An experienced officer described how he had struggled to gain entry into a dwelling where a man was confining his wife. His words illustrated the use of authority in a stressful situation:

I'm listening to my partner and he's saying, "Well,
we have to come in ...[and verify] that she's [not in the house]."

"Sir, listen up, listen up very good. I am going to stay here and I'm going to have my wife deliver me a *sandwich* and I'm going to stay here all day long. Staying here is going to be my full time job. The moment you open that door -- which you're going to have to do because you're going to run out of groceries pretty soon. You're going to run out of groceries before I do. And I'm going stay here till your hair turns grey -- if you don't open this door, this is where I'm going to be. And if you really irritate me, I'm going to call up the phone company and shut off your phone, shut off your water, shut off your electricity. Now OPEN THE DAMN DOOR! [emphasis his] Because we're coming in and we're not going anywhere until I confirm that your wife is ok." I start knocking on the door and he goes, "Stop knocking on the door!" I said, "This is the other thing I'm going to do, I'm a professional irritant and I'm going to knock on this door until you open it." Two minutes [later], the guy opened the door.
[Interview July 10th, 2002]

This situation could have become violent. But, the officer's authoritativeness -- quick wit and stoic determinism -- permitted action to resolve a stressful situation peacefully. Maintaining 'social respect' was especially important to manage confrontations with suspects and criminals. As one officer pointed out:

You need a certain amount of authority when you're dealing with people that are dirt bags, because they expect to be treated a certain way and if you don't treat them that way, you [become] a pushover.
[Interview: September 15, 2002]

Another officer recounted how he reacted to a challenge from a young offender:

I had a fifteen year old in the other day, who started beating up a phone in the interview room. I went a little nasty on him. I didn't do anything to him [that was] illegal --but [instead], I verbally lost it with him. He just got up and challenged me, the whole nine yards. He's fifteen f\$%^ing years old. I shouldn't be doing that stuff, but I think it's out of the ordinary for me to do that. That's what you remember. It's just one of those things right...After I lost it on him? He was very quiet. I told him what was going to happen to him if he continued to behave...told him that he wasn't at home anymore."
[Interview: August 12, 2002]

A second method of interaction that officers used to manage the stress of confrontation with citizens was physical force. Officers reacted to insults, death threats

and violence with an 'informal justice' that 'schooled' offenders in proper respectful behavior. Here was one example written up in my field notes:

Officers A & B are assigned to a domestic call in a trailer park. After conferring with the wife, the officers decide to remove the husband and take him to the 'drunk' tank as a preventative measure. I stand nearby, watching and wondering if the man is actually going to go willingly. Instead, as they bring him to the vehicle, the man becomes irate with the officers. While being put into the wagon, the husband struggles with them. As I watch intently, both officers force him into the back of the vehicle. Just as the officer shuts the cage door of the van, the husband calls Officer B a "bastard, idiot, asshole" and several other words -- to which Officer B responds, "Shut the f%^& up!" The officers close the door of the police van, but to my surprise, open it again to pull a cigarette from the man's mouth. After this, the man complains even more, yelling at Officer B and calling him a 'bald headed asshole' and other expletives.

Officer B is obviously pissed off at the man's behavior. He swears as we re-enter the vehicle. Before I can fix my seatbelt, the van backs up sharply -- throwing the husband to the back of the cage. After this, the husband continues his shouting at the officers -- despite the plated glass separating the prisoner from the main cab. Officer B turns around and tells me quickly, "Hold on when I tell ya!" I look surprised, then quickly fasten my seat belt. Officer A looks back and laughs. Almost right away, we reach a stop sign. Officer B slams on the brakes and as a result of the sudden stop, we hear the man fly forward and bang the plexi-glass with his body. Despite his attempt at a response, Officer B seems satisfied that his '*screen tests*' have put the man in his 'place'. I held the handles tight on the way to the jail, quite certain that the erratic driving was going to continue until the van finally stopped at the station. More problems occurred at the booking area, requiring the officers to put him into a neckhold. Officer B looks over at me while he's putting the hold on, almost looking to see if I'm impressed or as if to say, 'Look what this idiot made me do.'

[Field Notes: August 10, 2002]

In this case, the officers coped by using 'extra-legal' means to resolve the husband's affront. As a result, Officers A and B responded to the man's resistance in an attempt to reestablish their moral authority and social position as police officers. As, Waddington (1998) contended "contempt of cop" necessitated remedial action by police. As he describes it, the police treatment of defiant citizens was rooted historically in maintaining respect and the image of police. These situations were incidents of high

stress, requiring police co-operation and intervention. I witnessed two similar instances, one involving an officer transporting an unruly prisoner after a bar fight.

In the 15 minute trip to the station, two quick 'braking stops' were used to deal with the death threats from the prisoner handcuffed in the backseat. The same night, the officer accidentally 'screen tested' another prisoner after a pedestrian had stepped in front of the vehicle. "It's kinda cool when you can get two in one night and one by chance!"
[Field notes: July 18th, 2002]

Using violence through the 'screen test' ensured that an officer's authority was re-established and stress is released. During one interview, two officers described how they dealt with the frustration they experienced trying to uphold what they considered a moral code:

Officer R: "Christmas Eve. We respond to a call with social services -- probably six years ago. Arrived in the house, no furniture [was visible]. The two parents were crackheads. And two babies in the house [were] under four years old -- we responded to take the kids. The two kids were living in the bedroom in a two bedroom apartment. There was no food and four people living in the house. I'll never forget that Christmas Eve. What a f\$%#ing miserable nightmare... [I] choked the bejesus out of him -- which I enjoyed immensely. [Officer B laughs] Then, I took the kids [for social services]. I mean, you felt bad for the kids."
[Interview: September 15, 2002]

When explaining this situation during the interview, the officers struggled with their emotions. One officer's moral perception of how children should be raised justified the use of physical force during their removal. Informal justice bolstered the officer's understanding that a moral code about child-rearing was being broken and required his direct involvement. The officers also expressed frustration that no criminal charges would be laid against the parents. Not unlike Skolnick and Fyfe's (1993) description of police officer's frustration with the futility of the justice system, in my study police believed offenders are treated lightly and do not receive appropriate justice for crimes

committed. As a result, frustrated officers responded by imposing a form of street justice to reestablish the moral order and 'what is right'.

Violence was a troubling result of coping with stress in police work. Some officers, when faced with the stressful nature of confrontation and frustrations with the justice system, responded with forceful actions and authority against criminals and citizens alike. I do not suggest that these actions were indicative of all police officers at Halifax, nevertheless, they were negative or maladaptive coping means that deserved mention. Police used authority to manage stress, which was indicative of Skolnick's (1994) conception of the 'working personality' of police officers. Authority also allowed management of stress during on-going confrontations with citizens.

Lore

Lore was cultural knowledge. In police work, cultural knowledge was an arrangement of prescribed methods that police officers used to deal with situations encountered on the job. Other researchers (Ericson, 1982; Shearing and Ericson, 1991; Chan 1997) have described this knowledge as a set of 'recipe' rules or 'toolbox' remedies. Cultural knowledge was also described as the 'substance' of police tasks and the content of well-honed and hereditary practices of police officers. Story-telling and parables upheld and enshrined creative solutions and methods of police work within culture as tradition and lore. These original and inventive traditions also were used by officers when coping with stress. Below, I have identified two main elements of lore that guide coping behavior in police officers: recipe resistance and in-group coping solutions to stress.

Recipe Resistance

As indicated in Chapter Four, officers reported a significant amount of surveillance-related stress. During the research, I noticed that police officers used cultural inventiveness as a means to counter this problem and this took the form of coping through resistance. One officer described the use of discretionary and 'situationally justified' (Manning, 1997) decision making as a means to avoid the paper burden of implementing a serious criminal charge and at the same time reduce stress.

There's a lot of opportunity where the public would not know. Say you catch a guy and he's driving around while impaired, if you wanted to be real easy about it, you could arrest him for being intoxicated in public and not charge him with anything and pull him into the drunk tank for 24 hours. No one, other than the bad guy, would know the difference. However, [in the end] you didn't charge someone criminally. There's other more subtle stuff than that such as going to a call and say, a call of a 'suspicious person in the area' type of thing -- who went up to a door and tried the door, the door was locked then walked away from the house -- that was it. That call could probably be closed off pretty much with what we called "Notebook" -- just as a note to leave in your notebook -- [then] close the call and [there would be] no written report for calling [it] in. You can do that and it would be perfectly fine with policy and all... There will be no repercussions for your actions. You have the choice to do with it what you want to do. Because no one ever questioned you on it, how much work you do, how much effort you put into it. It's up to you...that's the point of it. [Interview: August 27, 2002]

So police officers used a combination of discretion and 'recipe rules' (Ericson, 1982) to avoid paperwork and additional investigation. They used computerized dispatch codes such as the notebook function ("NBK") and not the report to follow function ("RTF") to 'clear' calls and free up time or to avoid the call altogether. Computerized dispatch codes were generally hidden from review by dispatchers and supervisors unless further calls arose with the same location or offender. If no details were provided by the officer, there was much less chance that a 'cleared' call would be reviewed.

Another example came from my observations. A sergeant questioned an officer about a decision to avoid a call requiring substantial investigation. The patrol officers used a similar command in the dispatch system to “close a call” surrounding a shooting:

The sergeant was visibly annoyed that officers avoided canvassing the neighbours and victims. He indicated that there would be follow up investigations to make up for the 'lack of effort' made by officers the previous night. It became clear to me that the officers had avoided the call to protect their free time or continue with work that had 'more appeal'.

[Field Notes: August 10, 2002]

These instances were indicative of cultural discretionary decision-making and 'situationally justified' decisions (Manning, 1997). Officers used discretion to dodge undesirable tasks whether banal, repetitive or stressful. The use of resistance to avoid dispatch, computer generated paperwork and surveillance was also documented by Ericson and Haggerty (1997). Officers even collaborated with dispatchers to mask their activity (Ericson and Haggerty, 1997: 414). In these instances, officers 'booked-out' in one location, then informed the dispatchers where they would be. Others refused to use new laptop technology (ibid: 416). Ericson and Haggerty showed that officers developed ways to avoid and circumvent particularly those surveillance methods that threatened their culture.

Moreover, the resistance shown by officers was also a type of coping activity. Officers used resistance to mediate stress particularly when new technologies scrutinized their actions. In Halifax, I found that officers adapted and avoided information technologies to suit their work related needs while on patrol. One participant explained:

Well, we were talking before, it's almost like letting the cat out of the bag, if I say some officers that aren't comfortable on the street, they say one minute that they love the job, but these are the guys that are always looking for the Mickey Mouse calls to go on. They are always checking the “calls pending” to try and find

out what kind of [easy] calls are out there that can be time consuming...People will still look at [these officers] and be under the impression that they're doing a lot of stuff. Now granted that the more Mickey mouse stuff that they do still has to be done, but you get concerned when someone is always seeking out [easy calls] and they don't want to get involved in all the 'meat and potatoes' kind of stuff because as I say...we cannot pick and choose what we do and what we do not want to do. In reality we're not supposed to do it.
[Interview: July 16, 2002]

In Halifax, calls were held until details of the situation were confirmed and then they were dispatched. Some officers "cruised" these pre-dispatched calls to volunteer for easier ones like shoplifting and parking violations. Typically, these calls required little paperwork or contact with the public and an officer was often able to avoid a call involving a bar fight or a domestic situation. While "recipe" rules, often entailed avoidance of management scrutiny and internal controls (Ericson, 1982), they were also a practical "rulebook" of tactics to manage and avoid stress.

Officers also used information technology to enable "easing activity", defined as activity that alleviates the pressures of work through avoidance. During one field observation session, officers manipulated the computer aided dispatch system so as to allow them time for other activities. They delayed informing the dispatcher that they were "in-service" and available for another call. Officers used this tactic when they had finished a call earlier than expected. By not becoming 'available', officers were able to make extra visits to coffee shops or short trips to view the 'sights' at a busy bar and transport friends around the city. Private police officers in Toronto also used a type of technological 'easing' activity when on patrol. They regulated their use of bar codes or 'diester strip' scanners to free up time (Rigakos, 1999). Diester strips were an electronic watchman system used to account for time while at work. Most diester strips were located at patrol locations on their given 'beat'. However, other diester strips

represented 'non-patrol time' and were kept in a personal folder. Officers manipulated their use of these strips by adding more time to a certain task or apartment building checkup. Using this avoidance method, security officers adapted to boring and repetitive work.

Often touted as an "officer safety device", police cameras also recorded the vehicle activities for the day. Cameras were activated whenever the 'Code 1' lights and siren were in use. Each vehicle had a secured VHS recorder and in "cases of an incident", tapes were reviewed by management personnel. At Halifax, digital video cameras were usually turned off. Officers would do this when running red lights or stop signs at night, meeting with other officers or driving 'faster than necessary' to a low-rated dispatch call. By stopping the tape, they circumvented management and supervisory scrutiny of their actions, touted as a significant stressor among police.

Another technology used frequently by officers was the cell phone. Department cell phones are assigned to each police vehicle for police purposes: dictation of reports, contacting complainants and communicating with police supervisors. However, cell phones were used by officers for a variety of other reasons: usually to converse with other officers or contact family members. The officer's use of cell phones was a method of work avoidance and part of coping behavior in handling the stress of managerial control.

As technological and surveillant measures became advanced and assimilated into the working environment, stress and pressures were likely to become more frequent, increasing the need for adaptive cultural responses to workplace changes. Cultural resistance were indicative of their need to maintain control over an occupation that is increasingly becoming more automated and monitored. Lore-based recipe

resistance were a cultural remedy for officers who struggle to meet the demands of their job.

Coping Solutions

Police officers developed several solutions to stress that were acknowledged within their culture, including community involvement, family support and physical exercise. I noticed a distinct emphasis on fitness, training and nutrition as cultural solutions to the tensions of the job. These solutions were especially relevant for younger officers and distinguished them from previous generations of police officers.

One officer observed:

Now, people are a lot more responsible as far as [police] officers. I don't think they're turning to alcohol to relieve the stress or anything like that, but what I see now more is fitness -- more people get[ting] hired are younger and seem to be more aware of the aspect of physical fitness and good nutrition. So, you see a lot of people doing physical activity to get rid of stress, either before work or during lunch hour, things like that.
[Interview: August 23, 2002]

A second officer confirmed:

But the healthy thing is to talk about it and do what works for them, whether it be sports or whatever. It's nice to see that a lot of police officers are involved with hockey or baseball or going away doing this or doing things outside of police work. That's all positive.
[Interview: Sept 18, 2002]

A third officer remarked:

It's like a big family. We all hang out together and do lots of stuff together like hockey, lift weights or play golf.
[Interview: August 10, 2002]

A fourth officer illustrated how outdoor activity was a recipe response to difficulties during a day's work.

So in reality, I found myself in my fifth or six year in policing trying to find another approach to dealing with the stressors inherent in policing. Rather than going home directly after work in the summer time for example, I'd take my rod and reel out, change my clothes at work, stop off at a nearby lake and go fishing for an

hour. After an hour – I was tranquilized as a result of hearing that water splash against the shoreline, watching the sun go down, watching the moon come up, looking at the stars, catching a fish... and so calmed down as a result of the stressors inherent in my seventeen call day -- dealing with everyone else's garbage – that I was calm enough to go home, walk in the house and say, 'Hello I'm home.'

[Interview: July 12, 2002]

As well as physical activity, police officers recognized the importance of nutrition as a proactive response to stress related to shift work. One officer put it as follows:

There seems to be a new breed of cop, a new style of cop. Most guys come to work with a bottle of water and fruits and vegetables, things like that to stay reasonably healthy rather than come in here and eating the junk, cans or bags of chips and pizza slices. You don't see a lot of that anymore. Coffee drinking is going along the wayside. A lot of people who drank coffee will drink tea or water. It's a different style of cop altogether.[Interview: September 4, 2002]

The integration of physical fitness and healthy living styles was a positive event, that was reinforced within the culture of policing. Officers also used family and community involvement to manage the stresses of their occupation. One officer claimed that community involvement reduced stress and restored positive impressions of the police career.

To say collectively...we are all different. You know some guys immerse themselves in volunteer work, some guys immerse themselves in some of the canoe clubs here, some guys are fanatical to the degree that they work... My release is my time around my kids, I love nothing more than volunteering at my kid's schools, the scouting movement because my own kids have been involved in it. Being at my kid's sporting events, I'm usually hoarse at the end of the game because I'll be yelling words of encouragement to my own kids, kids on the other team, it doesn't matter. It's fun, it's enjoyable to watch. And as I've mentioned, home is the ultimate catalyst for me.

[Interview: July 16, 2002]

Other officers emphasized how spouses and siblings would have 'sit-downs' and share common experiences of stress. The support from peers and family remained a strong component of coping for police officers. Brewer (1991: 669) also acknowledged the importance of family in creating a 'tension-release mechanism' among police officers. For example, British officers, who sought personal refuge from the danger and threats of policing Northern Ireland, indicated that support from friends and family were useful to ensure an off-duty/on-duty separation in their mental state.

To date, other than Brewer (1991), the positive contributors of exercise, family and community support to stress management have been significantly neglected in the existing literature and research. As a result, I felt it necessary to include these elements in my discussion on cultural coping. My research demonstrated the importance of the family and community which were reinforced from within the police culture. These were in-group solutions to stress that occupy a significant role among officers. The support system of the police group shared coping methods, which were reinforced by strong cultural attitudes for adopting healthy lifestyles.

Values

Values were principles, beliefs and characteristics that influenced and guided the behavior of police officers. For police, values were forged by the 'working personality' of police and directly linked to their societal role and perception of 'why' they work as public servants. Values were identified in positive and negative philosophies such as mission and cynicism. These values and philosophies oriented the officer's ability to manage stress.

Stress, Police Mission and Cynicism

For police officers, the principle that directed their occupational role was the police 'mission'. This mandate was a defining element of police culture. It maintained their image as a moral force with a duty to protect society and the safety and well-being of citizens (Reiner, 2000; Manning, 1997). Here was how one officer described his perceived duty and societal role:

My kids have started to play [Dungeons and Dragons] once and a while...and one of the characteristics, of people who would be fighting good against evil, was *chaotic good* – and I firmly believe that, by and large, someone such as myself and a great many fellow police officers, we typify that type of persona. We have that type of personality to the extreme, we believe in goodness, we believe in justice. It's inherent in our personal makeup that we look upon life that way.
[Interview: July 16, 2002]

Another officer added:

...We want to represent what is good in society. We want to uphold the law, we believe that the law of the land is very important to maintain public peace and order. We keep people in peace and people living in a normal rational society who normally will maintain order when they are able to live peacefully together.[Interview: July 16, 2002]

In these examples, officers saw their position of upholding 'good' and preventing the "boring, messy, petty, trivial and venal" aspects of society from affecting ordinary people (Reiner, 2000: 89). They rationalized their social position in society as a shield (i.e. badge) that protected citizens and fulfilled their importance as police. These aspects of police culture were crucial for officers who coped with their involvement in troubling scenes. Two officers described the coping and justification process:

Officer G: [A colleague] had to go to that DOA where [the victim] head was rolled over by a truck which stopped on top of his head. ...When he arrived on scene He stopped there and froze for a couple of minutes thinking, "Well, that doesn't look real." "That looks fake – looks like a mannequin, that can't be right." He was thinking and just stood there and froze for a couple of minutes. And

then thought, "Oh, no I can see the squished brain matter squirting out the side there flowing into a trail now. It's real, I better get at it." He pulled himself together there and went at it.

Officer H: *You justify it in your own mind and deal with it yourself thinking, somebody in this world has to go and deal with these things.* Might as well be me. I think I know what I'm doing, I'm a pretty decent human being, somebody's gotta do it.
[Interview: September 4, 2002]

In many cases, officers valorized the police mission. As Kocklars (1980) observes, the pursuit of the police mission superseded the bounds of procedure to restore 'what is right'. One officer described how a colleague persistently pursued a suspected violent offender to alleviate his frustration with the justice system and ensure his moral ideal was maintained.

I remember one time, a police officer was at a call, where an impaired driver, ran into someone and hurt this person really badly. The impaired driver was also hurt in the car accident. [The suspect] left the scene and got away, however left a trail of blood [at the scene]. There was a firearm found in the car. So, it was quite a serious offence. The impaired driver was not identified because it was a stolen car. All that the police had in [the case] was blood. The sample of blood was collected and tested at a DNA bank. There was a suspect in the case and they couldn't prove it, [but] there wasn't much for a warrant to obtain blood [or other proof]. A few years later, this police officer saw the suspect in court and drinking a bottle of water and smoking a cigarette. The point being, that the guy threw the bottle of water and cigarette away in the garbage and the police officer went and got the bottle. He tested the DNA (in-house) and matched it against the blood from the scene a few years ago. [After proper warrants were applied for and obtained] the officer went back and charged the guy with the offence. He acted and had the determination to solve that case, it started to bother him [and he acted to alleviate that].

[Interview: August 24, 2002]

An officer's mission also helped overcome vicarious stressors encountered at work. One officer related coping with the pain of others:

One thing that I always liked to look at was, 'How do I justify my existence here on the job?' So, its hard to put a number or a dollar value on 'I answered this alarm call and I did this...I did that. I went to this break and enter.' [Now,] if you can walk into

someone that has been in a break and enter or someone that has been victimized themselves or sexual assault and comes out of that saying, [as the person] "I feel better – I know that I've had a shitty time and a shitty thing has happened to me – but I feel better because I've spoken to somebody who at least took me at face value and treated me the way I should be treated." That's also something kind of nice about [what we do].
[Interview: September 4th, 2002]

Many officers discussed a type of 'learned courage' that motivated them to continue, despite the challenging situations of the job. One officer noted:

I think that in reality it takes a tremendous amount of courage for any police officer to stand at his or her locker at the beginning of their shift and put on their uniform -- just the fact that we're willing to put on the uniform and go on patrol, realizing that untold horrors could await us. I think takes some of the most ultimate courage [to do this job]. I think it's pretty cool to be able to [function] and to not let [the job] consume you. But for people who've gone to work for twenty, thirty some odd years -- I tip my hat to them -- because they're definitely a different kind of person.
[Interview: July 16, 2002]

A second officer added his views as evidenced in my dialog with him and reported in my field notes:

We sit in the police vehicle having a short break and parked outside a local bar that has been known to be quite rough. The officer says, "Now imagine one night, we're just sitting out here, just like this, and then all of sudden you hear, pop pop pop! Then a man falls over from being shot and the crowd runs away screaming. You head over as quickly as possible, but realize that you are the one running toward the danger, while everyone is running away." As he explained excitedly, the officer claimed that as a police officer, you are expected face danger.

I would later find out that this situation was his re-enactment of a shooting incident that happened three months ago outside the same bar. The officer demonstrated that they are expected to face difficulties and stress that the public shies away from -- while acting normally, efficiently and professionally. This endeavor seemed to be an important characteristic of the job itself. Later that night, the officer mentioned that this 'learned courage' is something that young recruits often do not display, but eventually develop initiative to deal with these situations. He emphasized

that eventually newer recruits must learn to take hold of situations themselves or face a troubled career.
[Field Notes: July 12, 2002]

From within their culture, the police 'mission' defined their 'chaotic good' or overall purpose to uphold laws, protect citizens and contribute to a greater well-being of society. From the beginning of their career, officers recognized that their societal role bound them to a position where they must respond to any problem or danger. Officers reflected on this duty when faced with incidents of trauma, danger or difficulty. Officers accepted their role or mission to protect society and citizens, which functioned to shield officers from stress on the job. Officers were able to justify their involvement in stressful situations by mentally referring back to their primary mission to protect. An officer's best coping method was to acknowledge that stressful situations will occur and society needs someone to attend to them. An officer's poignant words embodied this thinking: "*Somebody's gotta do it.*" As a result, the police mission was a driving influence when dealing with stress in police work.

Police cynicism was a reaction to the police environment and it was directly related to the sense of mission that police share. As noted earlier, social isolation and social conflict remained significant stressors for police. One officer identified a cynical approach that helped manage confrontations with citizens:

...You wanted to go on your days off and help ... you bled for everybody. After several years...You go and do your job and pretend to be professional but limit your emotional contact with people, because [of the potential for confrontation]. [Perhaps] you're in a fight with someone at [a local bar] rolling across the floor and you look up and here's a drunken female -- a normal female that goes to university -- stealing your hat. Or you pull up somewhere and there's a bunch of nice looking people out at a party, having a good time looking like a beer commercial. You show up and you hear from the crowd, "Pig!" or 'Why don't you get a donut or something like that?' Things like that, after a while, you absorb an awful lot. [As a result,] when you pull up [on

occasions], you're not officer friendly anymore ... Big city policing is a hard, cold business. You just deal with it by develop[ing] an internal shell, an armour. [Interview: July 31, 2002]

This quote illustrated cynicism toward citizens that lacked empathy and idealism.

Cynicism developed as a highly detached and professional attitude that saw only negativity in the community. As the officer stated, negative aspects of society began to surface (woman stealing hat, snide remarks from citizens) over and over, resulting in disillusionment.

Cynicism or disillusionment in police officers has been characterized by several authors (Vick, 1981; Klinger, 1997; Barker, 1999;) but most notably, Reiner (2000) and Neiderhoffer (1969). Police theorists have argued that cultural elements of mission and cynicism are related – where a sense of commitment to uphold moral standards was challenged by what was experienced in the field (Reiner, 2000). In Halifax, social isolation and confrontation led to a sense of pessimism among officers when interacting with the public. Two officers commented:

I think it's safe to say that the longer you're here, the more you take on a bit of an identity. I think that probably a lot of it is the fact that we deal with so many negative things... You tend to look at a situation differently. You tend to look at people differently. Most of the time, when we get called to a situation, it would be a negative situation. Not too many people called [dispatch] to say that it's my son's birthday today or whatever and come by and visit.

[Interview: September 16, 2002]

One other thing that I find in most police officers anyways, that when you get on the job, you become cynical in certain aspects – you tend to start reading people before you start talking to them. That's just something that you get after working with so many people...

[Interview: August 18, 2002]

Police officers often felt “alienation, despair and a loss of faith in people” represented by cynicism (Niederhoffer, 1969: 97). Neiderhoffer related cynicism to a consistent exposure to the breakdown in social morality or ‘anomie’. This constant involvement with the criminal elements of society wore on officers, who began to judge people, events and situations with the public before interacting with them. Three officers commented on how some police reacted to the work environment:

I think on an on-going basis, if you’re always dealing with the negativity, you become cynical. You begin to rub it off on other people. I see that a lot with police officers. [Interview: August 23, 2002]

I would say that in general [the environment] makes us very cynical. We always talk about black humor and use humor to try and cover up the awful things we have to see and to try and deal with. [...] I always looked at when they talk about the shield, the badge and the shield that you wear. The shield is for the purpose of shielding the rest of society from those negative and awful things. The newspaper doesn’t report suicides, its not allowed to. I mean, police are the ones that go to the majority of these suicides, hangings, deaths, scenes where people are murdered, stabbed, hacked to pieces and we do this and deal with these things to spare the rest of the community and society from seeing them, so they don’t have to deal with that. [Interview: September 4, 2002]

One other thing that I find through most police officers anyways, that when you get on the job, you become cynical in certain aspects – you tend to start reading people before you start talking to them. Unfortunately, its just a part of a job and a trait that you unfortunately take on as you take the job on. [Interview: August 20, 2002]

Police therefore coped with the anomie and destructive conditions of their work environment, including facing social negativity, citizen confrontations, trauma, death and suffering – events that often contributed to cynicism as coping mechanism. In addition, officers experienced these anomic conditions and struggled with the apparent futility in their mission to ‘serve and protect’. This contrasted with earlier career philosophies and

attitudes where officers showed a heightened sense of servitude and high idealistic goals to improve society. Cynicism was a means to protect officers from the stress of disillusionment, negativity, confrontation and anomie. In its simplest function, cynicism was a coping response to the difficulties of the police environment.

Conclusion

When faced with difficulty and stress, police officers turned to work culture for help. For coping with stress, humor, talk and storytelling were the most significant outlets for Halifax police officers. Officers joked, told humorous stories of actual events and maintained a 'sense of humor' that characteristically retained their ability to do police work. Humor and storytelling were elements of communication and interaction and held significance within the makeup of police culture. Officers relied on these elements to maintain composure, establish friendships and inform others of their difficulties.

Officers were bound together by stress and recognized that most police officers are tasked with similar difficulties that must be overcome. As police experienced hardships together and endured the difficulties of policing anomic conditions, solidarity was strengthened and remained an element in the repertoire of coping methods available to police. Officers relied on the experiences of others to support them, as colleagues provided an element of social friendship and understanding of the difficulties of their job.

The cultural values of a police officer were also significant in coping with stress. Officers constantly weighed their duty or mission to protect citizens against the difficulties they face. Officers at Halifax saw their mission as justification to endure the

problems of society in that a greater 'good' is achieved. Mission maintained the internal ideologies of an officer, who continued productive work despite difficulty.

These findings were significant and identified that police cultural elements played a direct role in the stress management of police officers. The use of cultural elements as coping shows that stress management derived from group interaction and was a collaborative process. These elements of coping were used generally by police, as a palliative resource to mediate, cope, and in some cases avoided stress encountered in the occupation.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

For several months in 2002, I accompanied police officers on ride-alongs throughout Halifax. I explored an occupation that accepts few outsiders and is of interest to the ordinary public, whether in conversation, media or film. I found this research difficult, exciting, tiring and intriguing. Each session had its own set of experiences whose details were unique. Yet, there are some inferences that can be made about policing and about how police officers cope with stress. In this chapter, I draw out the important conclusions that derive from my findings. First, surveillance was a new major concern for police officers. Second, a police officer's social action was influenced by their culture and workplace social control. Third, contrary to psychological findings, cultural coping was a palliative and positive group process. Fourth, ethnography was an alternative appropriate methodology for studying workplace stress. Finally, there are several gaps in recent research and these should be considered for future studies.

'Surveillance Stress', Resistance and Police Action

I have shown that police officers reported two types of stress most frequently: trauma and surveillance. Both were reported with similar frequency, however the level of surveillance stressors was significant. To date, psychological research has shown that non-trauma and routine stressors are more troubling to officers than danger and life threats (Crank & Caldero, 1991; Patterson, 1992). My findings confirm this, but I illustrate these concerns in a more detailed description than when non-trauma stressors were first reported. Previous studies cited management conflict, internal relations and paperwork as stressors that superseded officer's concerns with danger and trauma at

work. I found that surveillance concerns have overtaken these stressors in importance. Police repeatedly felt stress about monitoring via information technology, investigative diary dates, excessive and redundant computer data entry for risk management, computerized dispatch, call workload, GPS technologies, statistics-based performance expectations and public scrutiny. These findings were consistent with the exponential increase in workplace surveillance since the early 1990s (Ericson and Haggerty, 1997; Lyon, 2002). Officers experienced these stressors as '*surveillance stress*' -- the result of being subjected to 'rhizomatic' monitoring from police management sources and the public. The surveillant workplace is clearly a trend in policing and it will continue into the future and remain a consistent concern for police officers (Ericson and Haggerty, 1997; Haggerty and Ericson, 2000; Chan, 2001, 2003; Gould, 2002; Lyon, 2002).

However, I also found that police officers responded to this stress from within their own culture. They resisted surveillance stress by deploying cultural coping methods with specialized avoidance strategies. These resistance methods were similar to those discussed by previous researchers (Bogard, 1996; Ericson and Haggerty, 1997; Rigakos, 1999). Furthermore, resistance had a more distinct motivation. As officers turned off cameras, cleared calls, used technology for their own purposes, they were throwing 'proverbial cogs' into the police system. Although previously conceived as avoiding management at work, I found that resistance was a means of coping through individual recipes similar to what Ericson and Shearing call "ways of being" (1991: 490). Officers in Halifax were taught to develop skills and methods to ease their work so that management and supervisory problems could be avoided.

This discussion is relevant when we consider the question, 'what influences police activity?' In recent years, police theorists have debated the origins of police action (most notably in Manning (1997) and Ericson and Haggerty (1997)). While I

found that the social action of patrol officers was directed by risk management influences, culture also remained a strong influence in an officer's daily activities. Police officers were certainly bound to the risk management needs of the organization. They recorded their every activities in notebooks and computer databases in an effort to justify their actions throughout the working day. These activities were overseen by management reviews and controls that ensured a heightened accountability within the department, other government agencies and the private sector. But, the police used culture to mediate problems arising from organizational demands. In some cases, officers used discretion to avoid excessive paperwork. Others developed recipe rules that guided their choice of calls for service. They made time for stories, humor and interaction – further defining working time as their own. Requests and controls from the computer-aided dispatch system were put aside for social time with other officers. This workplace reversal was what Bogard termed “la perruque”:

La perruque...diverts time on the job to the worker's personal use. More precisely...workers find ways to utilize their *worktime* to resist the spatial control strategies of their employers or, more simply put, to elude workplace surveillance and discipline (Bogard, 1996: 110).

Like Bogard, I found that Halifax patrol officers used their culture to form a practical day to day well-being. Police officers were dually influenced and they experienced surveillance and expressed stress concerns about it, but they developed clever means to cope with this as a cultural group.

Cultural Coping and Psychology

Coping with stress, I have argued, was more than an individual phenomenon. It was intrinsically linked to the workplace cultural group, where the lore, values, interaction and communication of the social group facilitate stress management. Accordingly, managing stress was a group endeavor. This was a significant departure

from previous studies that neglected culture in both the stress and coping processes (Alexander and Walker, 1993; Evans, et al. 1993; Leonard, et al., 1999; Patterson, 1999; Davis, et al. 2001). Psychological studies have labeled two main types of coping among police: emotion focused and problem focused. Primarily, problem focused (direct action) coping was thought to be more successful when officers were faced with stress, while humor and other cultural elements were not deemed to be effective or significant (Evans, et al., 1993; Alexander and Walker, 1994; Biggam, Power, MacDonald, 1997; Patterson, 1999; 2000). I came to a somewhat different conclusion and found that humor was the most significantly reported coping method by officers. For example, officers almost always mentioned that 'having a good sense of humor' was a crucial aspect needed to survive in the occupation. Officers told jokes to ease the stress of troubling scenes, to chastise the public and to 'lighten' spirits at work. Furthermore, all types humor were used by the police for stress relief, not only 'gallows' humor as reported by Pogrebin and Poole (1988) and Young (1995). This was a significant departure from previous conceptions of police humor, which narrowly interpreted stress coping as an officer's humorous reaction to trauma and disturbing crime scenes. Instead, I found that officers reacted to confrontational or annoying citizens with audience degrading humor. Others masked the boredom and frustrations inherent in police work with pranks and gags. So, all types of humor aided stress management and were integral to the coping process. Surprisingly, police cultural studies have neglected the importance of humor in police work and it was barely referenced in major texts (see Reiner, 2000).

Police solidarity was another element of cultural coping that played a crucial role in stress coping, but it too has received little attention in earlier studies. I found that solidarity was a vital part of police culture. I observed that solidarity itself was stress

management and that officers helped other colleagues at work gatherings, canteen sessions and social events. Officers shared stories, supported each other and reinforced their collective culture at these events. More importantly, my findings illustrated that exposure to stress contributed to the connection and solidarity between workers (ie. car accidents, sudden deaths, police-involved shootings, surveillance, trauma). Supplementing Skolnick (1994), I argued that police were not only connected by the danger they face or the authoritativeness they exhibited, but also by the stress they experienced as a group. From this, I argue that there was a recurring cycle in policing between solidarity, stress and support. Therefore, familial bonds were formed by stress. These findings were similar with Chan's (2003), who found that support from police culture was akin to family support. In some cases, work colleagues became more important than family members:

...this bond is stronger than the bond officers have with their families because only other police understand what you go through at work...One remarkable consequence of this is that even if a person is a stranger, he or he is accepted automatically in police circles because 'you're in the job'. (Chan, 2003: 251)

My findings show that police solidarity assumed a greater positive role in police cultural coping than was previously documented. Although the tightly knit police culture has been linked to the social isolation of police officers, I have argued that the cohesive benefits outweighed any isolation that may be generated as a result. Stress management was dependent on cultural cohesion, which was further supported by humor and communication; all of which were important elements of cultural coping with stress.

Some researchers have criticized police cultural coping, labeling it as maladaptive and linked to negativity, burnout, disillusionment, health and addiction problems (see Violanti, 1983; Violanti and Marshall, 1983; Vulcano et al., 1984; Violanti

et al., 1985; Golembiewski and Kim, 1990; Cannizzo and Liu, 1995; Barker, 1999; Leonard and Allison, 1999; Davey, et al., 2001). However, I observed many cultural coping methods (solidarity, humor, communication, mission, cynicism) and most were palliative, which supports the findings of Waddington (1999b) and Chan (2003). Informal justice was not condoned among police. I must admit that I was surprised that displays of violence existed in a progressive police department such as Halifax. Although these officers coped with stress in ways that were similar to the 1960s era of policing found in Westley's (1970) research, I saw little evidence that these methods and others that were negative or harmful. However, the majority of my findings and observations were important to contrast with those studies that continue to rely on older and negative interpretations of police culture.

Police cynicism had received a significant amount of criticism in previous research. Alternatively, I found that cynicism was a productive means to counter stress in police work. Officers described cynicism as a 'shield', 'shell' or 'armour' that protected them from the realities of police work. I found cynicism was a healthy product of stress coping, a sharp contradiction to previous interpretations that labeled it as part of the downward slope to burnout (Golembiewski and Kim, 1990; Cannizzo and Liu, 1995). Cynicism adopted a positive role in an officer's daily work by preparing an officer for danger, trauma and stress. This was consistent with Caplan (2003), who argued that cynicism is a vital 'survival tool' for police:

...the police system encourages sensitivity to danger and officers who are cynical and suspicious of their surroundings are better prepared for the unexpected...the police job inevitably produces cynicism; therefore, perhaps it is an evolutionary career trait: the cynical survive and the idealistic do not (Caplan, 2003: 311).

Chan also acknowledges that police culture created a "defence mechanism" which responded to the difficulties that officers face (2003: 254). It is clear that although

cynicism has been portrayed as negative, there were contributory aspects of cynicism that aided police officers in their daily work.

Moreover, the police canteen has also endured an unfavorable assessment by previous studies. Fielding (1995) labeled 'cop-canteen' culture as the foundation for a deviant subculture fostering discrimination and malpractice. In the canteen sessions that I observed, this was not evident. Perhaps this illustrated a change in attitudes among officers, who wish to distance themselves from past problems of racism as exemplified in the research findings of Westley (1970) and Chan (1997). I found the 'cop canteen' was an opportunity for palliative storytelling. In the canteen, officers told stories and 'parables' to teach, share objectified emotions and bond with colleagues. It operated to support the police group and as a library of coping methods for those seeking stress management. As Shearing and Ericson (1991: 492) noted:

Police say repeatedly ...to adopt a demeanor that pacifies, placates, and mollifies. 'Always act', said an experienced officer, 'as if you were on vacation.'

Canteen locations were also important. Previous studies on storytelling focus on how stories are told, but lacked an examination of where storytelling takes place (see Ericson and Shearing, 1991; Brewer, 1990). My findings show that storytelling often occurred in desirable areas, where officers conversed uninterrupted and away from management scrutiny. Officers used the booking area to discuss events shortly after they occurred. Communication was facilitated by technology. Computers and cellphones allowed access to conversation and one-on-one talk that promoted in-person gatherings. These findings not only added to past perspectives, but also revived the canteen culture as a location for productive interaction.

At first glance, some coping may be interpreted as negative or misleading (i.e., those who witness officers laughing at crime scenes) (Pogrebin and Poole, 1988). But

my findings suggest that 'positive' and 'negative' aspects of coping functioned palliatively. For instance, police officers used humor in ways that furthered their ability to do work in dangerous situations, despite the fact that some of this humor may appear crude to the ordinary citizen. Storytelling informed others of their stress in a work-safe manner and also displayed a fair amount of cynicism. Mission narratives protected police well-being by justifying their involvement in challenging situations but this could be viewed as overly-authoritative and intimidating by others. Group solidarity bound officers together to manage stress but this has been perceived as isolationist. Previous studies illustrated a similar palliative 'contradiction'. Waddington (1999b) acknowledged that police culture functioned to cope with the realities of the occupation and was comparable to similar cultures in other emergency service occupations.

How do they survive it? ...they create and maintain an oral culture which (for all its morally reprehensible qualities) shields them from the implications of their work (Waddington, 1999b: 114).

Pogrebin and Poole (1988, 1991) and Young (1995:162) also stated that humor is both positive and negative. It was "morbid", "horrible" and "cynical", but it also strengthened the bonds and social communities within the culture. Coping with stress therefore had positive and negative cultural responses, but worked to achieve similar objectives.

There are a few conclusions that can be made about existing studies on the topic. To date, psychological studies have neglected the possibility of the cultural group involvement in stress management. Studies have focused on the individual rather than emphasizing workplace cultures. The importance of emotion-based coping methods, such as humor, solidarity, cynicism, communication and resistance have been relatively understated among current research. Finally, conclusions about cultural coping have misunderstood the nature of cultural coping as a palliative resource that often appeared 'negative', but when interpreted within the culture, showed a positive response to stress.

Psychology, Cultural Analysis and Ethnography

Policing has attracted a significant amount of attention from stress and coping researchers. My approach explored coping beyond the conceptual and methodological scope of previous studies by introducing a fresh perspective: a study using interpretive cultural analysis and an ethnographic methodology. Previous studies have been psychology-based and focused on the individual. Also, with one exception (see Toch, 2002), these studies relied almost exclusively on surveys and mail-in questionnaires for data gathering methods ⁷(see Violanti and Marshall, 1983; Golembiewski and Kim, 1990; Coman and Evans, 1991; Patterson, 1992; Brown et al., 1999; Leonard and Alison, 1999). While these studies produced an abundance of findings on the stressors experienced by police, few used a framework of analysis or methodology that could examine culture in the stress and coping process.

Cultural analysis and ethnography was an appropriate and alternative approach to study stress and coping. It recognized that types of knowledge form culture and acknowledged the functional relationship between culture and social action. Cultural analysis also allowed for the examination of micro and macro aspects of social phenomena, which in this project, permitted for an investigation of surveillance stress and recipe resistance within the same analysis. Also, ethnography provided another type of investigation through interviews and participant observation. Officers told stories of past coping experiences and I had the opportunity to see coping in progress as stressful events occurred during observation sessions. In my study, I viewed culture from the field and developed close involvement and rapport with participants. When

⁷One notable approach was Toch's (2002) psychological study of stress. In the study, Toch used qualitative and quantitative methodologies to examine stressors in police work including: interviews, focus groups, participant observation and surveys. This was a significant departure from previous research trends, although his study did not address coping.

strong rapport was built, officers felt comfortable in revealing background information crucial to understanding the cultural meaning of what I observed. This approach would be difficult to achieve by survey alone. Through an interpretive-influenced ethnography, I also found it was important to voice the participants concerns in their own words. This approach fostered an appreciation for participant contribution, as words were presented in their whole context. This was a significant departure from previous psychological research, which only illustrated stress concerns in short quotations from participants (Leonard and Alison, 1999).

One unfortunate aspect of previous stress studies was that it carries an assessment process. Specifically, there was a specific stigma of evaluation inherent with psychological studies that deal with stress and coping phenomena. I found that participants and key contacts had concerns that their answers on stress and coping would be diagnosed and medicalized. This was also compounded by the police culture, which was resistant to expressing emotion, especially to an outsider. I struggled with this problem throughout my study and consistently attempted to reassure those involved that this would not be the case. As a result, it was important to distance stress and coping research from this unfortunate misunderstanding of psychological assessment. My thesis examined stress in a manner that was appropriate, in that it avoided misunderstanding and permitted continued communication with participants.

Future Research

My findings and experiences suggested that there are a few potential avenues for further investigation and research. They include: studying police officers in off-duty groups, comparative studies of coping and further studies on surveillance stress.

Police group culture was crucial to coping. In my study, groups of officers were observed in canteen sessions and social events, which were sites rich in culture and

away from on-the-job scrutiny. Yet, most studies focused on the uniformed work environment and there has yet to be a dedicated study of the off-duty environment. Observing off-duty events and activities could yield a greater understanding of group culture and police culture in general. Does police culture vary when officers are off-duty? Do coping methods change from on-duty to off-duty? Are there off-duty specific cultural coping methods? That being said, a focus on police social groups may require significant contacts and sufficient rapport necessary for acceptance at these events. This may also require a researcher that is already a member of the police group, as occurred with Van Maanen (1978), Kocklars (1981), Young (1995) and Caplan (2003) for example.

Also, my research studied officers as a group, including female and male officers with varying ages, ethnic backgrounds and experience levels. However, further coping research studies might consider these characteristics separately in a comparison with cultural coping measures. For instance: Does race affect coping? Do female officers have different cultural coping methods? How does education affect cultural coping? What cultural elements are younger officers more likely to use? Do officers earlier in their career have different coping styles? How do coping styles change? How do experience levels change culture and the working personality? Cultural coping methods of cynicism, humor and lore are likely to change as an individual's career progresses. As an example, a comparative study might determine that cynicism overtakes humor among more experienced officers, where other cultural elements such as machismo, mission and authority are more prominent among rookies.

Further study should examine the effects of surveillance and information technology on worker well-being. As was evident in my project, surveillance stress was an emerging problem. Products of surveillance and workplace scientific management

were stressors for police officers, but no-one has actually analyzed the difficulties they cause for general workers. One might argue that every worker, regardless of their industry, experiences varying levels of surveillance, including: security, corporate business, information technology, retail sales and public service. Understanding the effect of the increasing surveillance trend is important. What are the consequences for workers being driven by the computer's pace of work? How do workers perceive their surveillance stress? How does it affect them? Are employers aware of the stress that is caused by surveillance measures? Is surveillance stress created deliberately? It is clear that police officers and other workers in general are experiencing change in their workplaces. New research should establish an awareness on how these changes effect the worker's personal and social life.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I introduced an approach that considers police occupational culture as a tool used in stress management. My cultural analysis approach was significantly different than previous approaches found in psychology, the source of many studies on the topic of stress. Officers of the Halifax Regional Police department described daily stressors that they experienced and I found that surveillance and trauma related stress were the most frequently reported concerns. These stressors also created innovative methods of coping which were found within the police culture. Elements of an officer's work culture, such as communication, interaction, lore and values were integral to coping with stress. Officers used these elements, exemplified by humor, solidarity, storytelling, recipe resistance, cynicism, mission and authority to mediate stress at work. These elements were palliative, in that they had a positive effect on police officers. My

findings suggest that culture is an important component in stress management and that officers rely on culture and each other to cope with stress.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Sample Demographics (Tables)

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	22	1	4.3	4.8	4.8
	25	3	13.0	14.3	19.0
	27	1	4.3	4.8	23.8
	28	1	4.3	4.8	28.6
	29	1	4.3	4.8	33.3
	31	2	8.7	9.5	42.9
	33	1	4.3	4.8	47.6
	34	2	8.7	9.5	57.1
	36	3	13.0	14.3	71.4
	37	1	4.3	4.8	76.2
	39	1	4.3	4.8	81.0
	40	1	4.3	4.8	85.7
	42	2	8.7	9.5	95.2
	46	1	4.3	4.8	100.0
	Total	21	91.3	100.0	
Missing	System	2	8.7		
Total		23	100.0		

Length of Service (years)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.50	2	8.7	8.7	8.7
	.58	1	4.3	4.3	13.0
	.75	1	4.3	4.3	17.4
	.91	1	4.3	4.3	21.7
	2.00	1	4.3	4.3	26.1
	3.00	4	17.4	17.4	43.5
	3.50	1	4.3	4.3	47.8
	4.00	1	4.3	4.3	52.2
	8.00	2	8.7	8.7	60.9
	9.00	1	4.3	4.3	65.2
	10.00	1	4.3	4.3	69.6
	12.00	2	8.7	8.7	78.3
	14.00	1	4.3	4.3	82.6
	15.00	1	4.3	4.3	87.0
	16.00	1	4.3	4.3	91.3
	18.00	1	4.3	4.3	95.7
	19.00	1	4.3	4.3	100.0
	Total	23	100.0	100.0	

Marital Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	married	11	47.8	47.8	47.8
	single	8	34.8	34.8	82.6
	divorced	2	8.7	8.7	91.3
	separated	2	8.7	8.7	100.0
	Total	23	100.0	100.0	

Highest Level of Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High School	2	8.7	8.7	8.7
	some	4	17.4	17.4	26.1
	university	13	56.5	56.5	82.6
	degree	4	17.4	17.4	100.0
	trade				
	college				
	Total	23	100.0	100.0	

Appendix B: Written Response to Research Ethics Board correspondence

David B MacDonald

Research Ethics Board
Saint Mary's University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada B3H 3C3

May 22, 2002

Dear Research Ethics Board Chairperson:

After careful review of the May 13, 2002 correspondence from the research ethics board and discussions with my supervisors, I will clarify and respond to issues raised during the review of my application. In this letter, I will follow the same numbered format of issues as presented in the REB correspondence.

1. You indicate that you propose to conduct participants from a previous study. While participating in the 1999-2000 study, did they sign a consent form indicating that they could be contacted in the future by researchers? If they did not, then the proposed procedure violates the confidentiality of participants. This does not appear to be the sole means of contacting participants, so we suggest that it be dropped in favour of other methods of subject recruitment.

In my previous study, during my honours year, participants were asked to sign consent forms for involvement in the specific study only. However, after each field observation, many participants openly offered to be contacted in the future, indicating that, if needed, they would again welcome my presence as researcher.

Also, part of the agreement to conduct the research involved disseminating the study's findings among participants. As a result, I forwarded a copy of my thesis by mail to the address of each participant, accompanied with a letter thanking them for their participation in the project. The research was well received and on good standing with the participants and department. After the research was completed and officers had received feedback, three participants corresponded with me about the research and again offered further involvement if I decided to conduct research in the future.

From the assurances by police officers who participated in my 1999-2000 study and conditions of the researcher-participant agreement, I believe that contacting them for my current study is warranted and to do so would not violate the confidentiality or anonymity of previous research participants.

2. Although you say (section E, #2) that you will provide information on the Employee's Assistance Program, nothing to this effect is included in the consent materials. We suggest that you, first, contact the EAP provider before-hand to inform them about the study (methods, potential harm, etc) and to obtain any advice they might have, and second, to provide all participants with the referral information and feedback immediately upon completion of their participation.

For this issue, I agree that it is necessary to contact the EAP before the research begins. To respect the hierarchical organization of the police department, I will contact and obtain advice from the EAP staff after the administration has agreed to allow officers to participate in the project. It is clear that the EAP would be reluctant to give advice until department supervisors have approved the project. After the project has been approved, I will discuss with the EAP provider how to respond to a situation as described in my REB application (section E, #2). From the EAP's advice, I will approach the situation accordingly.

However, the issue of feedback "immediately upon completion of their participation" is not possible due to the nature of ethnographic research. With ethnographic observation and interview, data from each session is transcribed and recorded, but is not coded or analysed until after the final field session is completed. This method allows the data to be viewed as a 'whole', allowing for recurring cultural themes and information to be uncovered by the researcher. Any attempt to preclude the final analysis of the research data would put the validity of the research at stake and provide 'guess work' estimations of the project to participants. I believe that in this case, immediate feedback would also give the impression to participants that I am 'judging' or 'appraising' our shared experiences and conversations of the day's field observation, an impression that is certainly outside of the purpose and goals of my research.

From this perspective, I believe the appropriate method for feedback is to provide information after the project is completed. As stated in my REB application (Section C, #6), I will write the participants of the study to thank them for their involvement and also provide a summary of the findings at that time.

3. It is unclear in the consent form whether the participants are being asked to consent to both the observation and the interview (see third paragraph: "This particular part of the research consists of a formal interview..."). It should be clear that both aspects of the research are covered by the consent process (or use separate consent forms for each phase of the research).

I have amended the form to include the consent of both aspects of the research. I have added the statement, "This consent form covers all facets of the research" to the consent form.

4. Although you declare, “All information obtained will be kept strictly confidential,” it is unclear what the force of this assurance has in the context of this type of field research. First, there is no legal right of confidentiality and if the research witnesses an illegal act during the ridealong, then he or she might be required to testify to that effect. In so doing, the researcher violates confidentiality. Second, if the researcher witnesses an illegal act, he is ethically obligated to report it, regardless of guarantees made to research participants. We suggest that the researcher spell out the limits to confidentiality in the consent form to allow for truly informed consent.

With respect to this issue, I must inform the REB that the requests of the reviewer violate the code of ethics of the American Sociological Association (<http://www.asanet.org/members/ecoderev.html>) and the draft code of the American Society of Criminology. My supervisor, Dr. George Rigakos, has informed me that if I adopt the requests of the reviewer, he will not allow the research to continue, as it would be unethical to do so.

The discussion of confidentiality in criminological research is a well-sourced one. In the literature, it is widely agreed that while conducting criminological research, the researcher must do everything possible protect the confidentiality of participants, including those involved in criminal activity. Sociology and Criminology codes of ethics ensure that the researcher hold information and identities in strict confidence, despite that there are no legal protections for the researcher. As a result, the researcher is ethically bound to protect the confidentiality of research participants even if challenged by a court-ordered subpoena. Only in cases where it would be unethical to withhold confidential information from the authorities, such as health or life threats to a person, should researchers break confidentiality. An unlimited guarantee of confidentiality of identity is thus integral to maintain ethical standards to protect research participants, but also maintain the validity and reliability of data and further research.

In criminological literature, it is agreed that limiting confidentiality (or discussing the possible limits) *a priori* promotes mistrust and lack of confidence from research subjects, who may refuse or withhold responses if it is thought that the researcher would report their behavior. In many cases, if researchers were required to report illegalities, some criminological research would not be possible (such as research on youth gangs, drug users, etc.).

5. In an interview or a questionnaire, the participant can opt out of any or all of the data collection (i.e., by not answering specific questions) – can participants opt out of any of the participant observation or is their only recourse to withdraw from the study?

For this issue, I have made clarification on the informed consent form, indicating that police officers can withdraw their participation from “any part or whole of this study, at any time without penalty”.

6. You propose to “store all information and data in a secured container in my residence.” We believe this is insufficient and that the supervising member(s) of the faculty need to provide secure storage in the institution.

I have arranged for data and information to be stored in a secured container at the Criminology laboratory, Sociology Department, Saint Mary's University.

7. In your letter dated May 2, 2002, you assure the superintendent that your project has been reviewed and approved by Saint Mary's University's REB. This assurance should not have been giving in advance of receiving our formal approval. Has the letter been sent?

No, the letter has not been sent. This letter was intended to provide as much information to the REB as possible, giving reviewers a look at the final wording of the correspondence to the department. I will begin my correspondence with the police organization once the ethics process has been completed.

8. Finally, please ensure that all materials are updated to reflect the change in Chair of the REB.

Because I had downloaded the forms before the change in Chairperson, I will adapt all my materials to reflect this change.

Thank you for the review of my application. I hope that this letter provides adequate clarification required for the issues presented in your letter. If further information is necessary, please contact me by phone or email.

Sincerely,

David MacDonald

Criminology Graduate Student

Appendix C: Request for Access

Request for Access

David B. MacDonald
[address]

[Police Service contact]
Halifax Regional Police

June 14, 2002

Dear [police service contact]:

Pursuant to my telephone inquiries with [Deputy Chief], I am forwarding an Access Request and Terms of Reference to the [Police Department name]. This letter concerns a thesis research project I wish to conduct as a Master of Arts in Criminology student at Saint Mary's University, under the direction of Dr. David Perrier (420-5882) and Dr. John L. McMullan (420-5885).

As the academic deadline for the full completion of Masters theses is October 1, 2003, a timely decision on this matter would greatly be appreciated. Thank you for your time and consideration of this thesis project.

Sincerely,

David B. MacDonald

Enclosed: Terms of Reference, Interview Guide (Appendix A), Informed Consent Form (Appendix B), Informed Consent Supplement Card (Appendix C)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Cultural Coping with Stressful Situations in Police Work

Objectives

The thesis project that I wish to conduct will employ [Department name] patrol officers as a research sample and will analyze the cultural methods officers use to cope with stressful situations encountered in the occupation. The objects of analysis for this thesis project are existing police cultural theories and explanations of coping with stress in police work, rather than evaluating the practices of patrol officers at the [Department name]. The thesis, in general, will analyze how work and occupational groups support coping with stress, and specifically how police culture helps officers manage the difficulties of the police environment. The thesis does not concern itself with policing specific populations or communities (e.g. visible minorities or women).

Background

When reviewing the literature on stress and coping in police work, one sees that a large majority of academic studies that address this topic are psychological. Psychological research has addressed many aspects within the concept of police stress, including studies that review stress definitions, types, causes, coping measures, effects and responses. While discussing police stress, psychological based studies have given little attention to specific elements of police culture that aid and support a police officer's coping with stressful events. As a result, research that investigates police coping from a socio-cultural perspective would elaborate on the social processes that help police officers overcome difficulties and challenges of the job and also emphasize the role of work groups and occupational culture in stress management.

In sociological research, few studies have discussed how elements of police culture aid officers to cope with occupational stress and danger. However, in most cases, the emphasis of previous social research focused on how humor and stories are used to negotiate stressful and tragic events in police work (Pogrebin and Poole, *Humor in the Briefing Room*; Brewer, *Police 'Talk' about Danger*; Ericson and Shearing, *Culture as Figurative Action*). From these theories, humor and stories are argued to support the culture of the group by sharing attitudes, experiences and relationships that act as a *palliative and positive* coping strategy and counters the difficulties of the occupation. As a result, in general, studies of police culture argue that occupational socialization and culture are integral to police work and identify the police officer's cultural milieu as a continuing determinant of the manner and method of policing.

This thesis project will test theories of police stress and coping, and through the observation of police officers, will identify and determine the extent of cultural involvement in stress management.

Sample and Access

Research for this project will be facilitated through a series of 'ride-alongs' during the shifts of participating police officers, which would involve accompanying officers during regular patrols and break periods. It is hoped that interviews with participants will be conducted at unobtrusive intervals during the patrol work. Also as part of the research, I would facilitate one-hour interviews with a separate sample of patrol officers not involved in the field 'ridealongs'. An interview guide has been included as *Appendix A*.

As a representative sample of participants is often desired, this research project would require a minimum of 15 patrol officers to take part for the 'ridealong' aspect of the research, where I would accompany the officer (and partner if possible) for two or three shifts of their rotation. The group of interviews independent from the field study would comprise of an additional 15 patrol officers. It is hoped that a representative sample of men and women patrol officers will participate in the study.

If possible, a department email could be sent to patrol officers in the municipality, describing the research and requesting for volunteers to contact me by phone or email. Using a 'snowball' technique, other participants may either be referred to me by their fellow officers or will be contacted by the researcher and asked to participate. As well, I will arrange contact with officers who participated in my previous research project to ask if they would be available for this study.

Ethics

In the interest of consent and confidentiality, all officers participating in the research project will be asked to sign an informed consent form. After identifying the purpose of the research project, the forms will specify that officers may withdraw from the research project at any time, that notations indicating their identity will not be kept and also indicate that all audio recordings will be destroyed. All police officers will be notified that their participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw from the study at any time.

If the [Department Name] wishes their involvement be anonymous, the organization can be referred to as "Canadian Police Service" or another pseudonym. Although, given the nature of the research, the need for such a provision is likely unnecessary.

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board.

Appendix D: Research participant Invitations (Email)

(short version)

Subject: SMU research project volunteers – patrol officers

The [Department Name] has agreed to participate in a master's thesis research project with David MacDonald, Saint Mary's University. His thesis project focuses on cultural coping with stressful situations in police work (humor, stories, group solidarity, etc). We are looking for 15 patrol officers who will take Mr. MacDonald in a ride-along capacity for two or three shifts of their rotation. An audio taped interview and note-taking will take place during the shift. An additional 15 participants are also required for a separate one-hour interview session only. Members wishing to assist in this project are asked to contact David MacDonald at: [contact info]. When you reply, please indicate which involvement you can provide (ride-along or separate interview) and also include availability dates. The project will take place from July 5, 2002 – Sept 30, 2002.

(Long version)

Dear [Department Name] Police patrol officer:

I am a graduate student in the Department of Sociology and Criminology at Saint Mary's University. As part of my Master's thesis, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. David Perrier and Dr. John L. McMullan. I am inviting you to participate in my study, which has recently been approved by the department, and will review how police culture responds to stressful situations in police work.

When reviewing the academic literature on stress and coping in police work, we find that the topic has been researched quite a bit in the psychology field, but little work has been done in sociology and criminology, specifically looking at how culture helps officers with difficulties encountered on the job. The few studies that have been completed to date focused on how humor and stories are used to negotiate difficult events and situations in police work. From these theories, humor and stories are argued to support the culture of the group, by sharing attitudes, experiences and relationships that act as a positive coping strategy and countering the difficulties of the occupation. These studies have directed my approach and interest in the current project.

In my upcoming project, I hope to accompany participants in a ride-along capacity for two or three shifts of their rotation. An audio taped interview and note-taking will take place during the shift. I will also looking for participants in separate one-hour interview sessions with officers not involved in the ride-along aspect of the research.

If you (or others) are interested in participating, please contact me: [contact info]. When you reply, please indicate which involvement you are interested in (ridealong or separate interview) and also include dates when you are available for participation. The project is now underway and will continue until September 30, 2002.

I hope that you will find this project interesting and I encourage your participation in either aspect of the field study. Thank you for your time and consideration!

Sincerely, David B. MacDonald

Appendix E: Internal Letter to Police Sergeants

To: NCOs (SSgt, Sgt1)
Date: 8/12/02 3:32PM
Subject: Ride-A-Longs

David MacDonald, a Saint Mary's University student, is conducting research for his thesis with [Department]. As part of his research, Mr. MacDonald will be going on frequent ride-a-longs with [Department] members who are participating in his project. Although policy states that ride-a-longs are not to occur on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, could you make an exception in this case. Mr. MacDonald's project has been approved by management and whatever assistance can be provided to him will be appreciated.

Appendix F: Interview Guide

Introductory Questions and Demographical information:

Gender, Age, Martial status, Level of education, Length of service, Reasons for joining police service

Research Specific questions:

1. What is police work?
2. What characteristics do you think typify a police officer?
3. What characteristics do you share with your colleagues?
4. Is there a common identity of a police officer? If so, what does it comprise of?
5. What is good police work?
6. What is bad police work?
7. Considering the work of a police officer as a whole, what do you like about policing?
8. Are there any features that you do not like about policing? Explain.
9. What kind of on-the-job difficulties do police experience frequently?
10. What kind of socially negative situations can a police officer experience? What have you experienced?
11. When is policing dangerous? When are you afraid? Give examples of how you dealt with the situation.
12. What situations are most challenging? What situations are overwhelming?
13. Can you recall a situation that was stressful during a working shift (such as attending a difficult accident or house call)? Describe the situation if you can.
 - a. What happened?
 - b. Who was involved?
 - c. What was your reaction to the incident? Your peer's reaction? Your supervisor?
 - d. Did you talk about the situation to other officers? How and where?
14. How does an exposure to trauma, negativity and danger affect policing?
15. How do officers cope with a difficult situation, event or occurrence? What are some tactics police officers use?
16. Can you think of how you or a colleague reacted to an experience or event that was 'out of the ordinary'?
17. Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix G: Observational Template

Cultural Knowledge

Mandate and cynicism

Does an officer justify their role after a stressful incident? Do they use ideologies of authority and power to mediate difficult situations? Is violence used to ensure authority in these situations?

Do police officers express frustration or pessimism as a result of stressful incidents? How frequent is negativity, pessimism or cynicism? What prompts cynicism? Does cynicism affect their interaction or reactions with the public or colleagues?

Perceptual shorthand, solidarity and isolation

Do officers use designations to mediate stress and danger? How do they typify the public or officers in such cases?

How do officers use the police group to mediate stress? What events or activities enable a collective debriefing after work? (pool, drinking, gambling) Describe.

Do how do officers react to contact with citizens? Do officers discuss or engage in activities with non-officers?

Tool-box or recipe rules

Are there any 'tricks of the trade' that officers describe or use when dealing with stress? Do officers share or trade common experiences?

Creating cultural knowledge

Humor, stories and narratives

How is humor used by police officers after (or when describing) a stressful event? How is it employed? Who is present? When is it made (public or canteen)? Are there different humorous exchanges for danger as opposed to depressing scenes?

Are stories told after a stressful event? What was the 'stage' (public/canteen)? Was it an anecdote or lengthy story? Was it told as advice or 'similar' experience? Describe the event.

Masculinity/Femininity

How do men and women mediate stress? Is there a difference between them? What cultural coping method is used most often by women?

Are women involved in similar cultural gatherings? How do they participate and react to canteen stories?

Do women approach stress differently? Are events that women officers find stressful different from men?

What role does machismo play in stress reduction? Do officers express 'toughness' when dealing with stress? Does an officer's machismo lead to violence as coping?

Stressful Incidents

1. What did the incident involve? (danger or depressing scenes)
2. How was the officer involved? The public? How many police officers at the scene?

Appendix H: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Cultural Coping with Stressful Situations in Police Work

David B. MacDonald

Criminology Graduate Program

Department of Sociology and Criminology

Saint Mary's University

Halifax, NS B3H 3C3

[contact info]

I am a graduate student in the Department of Sociology and Criminology at Saint Mary's University. As part of my Master's thesis, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. David Perrier and Dr. John L. McMullan. I am inviting you to participate in my study. The purpose of the study is to examine how police culture responds to difficult and challenging situations in police work.

This study involves participant observation and interview of patrol officers in the [Department name]. The primary focus of the research is field observation, which will involve accompanying officers throughout working shifts and breaks. The research will involve observing the social and cultural elements of policing that facilitate coping with the challenges of policing. The research also consists of a formal interview where tape recording and note taking will take place. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. The interview will discuss aspects of police work, stressful situations (such as social negativity and danger) and coping in police work. This consent form covers all facets of the research.

Throughout the research, names or titles will not be recorded or used in the analyses. Where necessary, pseudonyms will replace names, position, shift, section and department of participants. **Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from any part or whole of this study at any time without penalty.** All information obtained in this study will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. To further protect individual identities, this consent form will be sealed in an envelope and stored separately. Furthermore, the results of this study will be presented as a group and no individual participants will be identified.

If you have any questions, please contact the student researcher David B. MacDonald, at [contact info].

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. John MacKinnon at ethics@stmarys.ca, Chair, Research Ethics Board.

By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Please keep one copy of this form for your own records.



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