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## Sex and Setting: A Look at Operational and Organizational Stress in Policing

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SEX AND SETTING: A LOOK AT OPERATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS IN  
POLICING

A Thesis

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Designation

University Honors with Distinction

Laura Anne Lundell

University of Northern Iowa

December 2010

This Study by: Laura Anne Lundell

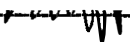
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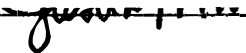
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## Chapter I

“Unchecked, extreme stress is an emotional and physical carnivore. It chews hungrily on so many of our law enforcement officers with its razor-sharp fangs, and does so quietly, silently in every corner of their lives. It affects their job performance, their relationships and ultimately their health” (Grossman & Christensen, 2008). This is a quote from Lt. Col. Dave Grossman who is a psychology professor at the University of North Carolina who has extensively studied psychology as it relates to law enforcement and the military.

Lt. Grossman’s comments are supported by statistics that show the stress experienced by law enforcement officers puts entire communities at risk by jeopardizing the officers’ physical, mental, and emotional capabilities both on the job and at home. Police officers are continually ranked as having one of the top three most stressful occupations according to the Occupational Disease Intelligence Network (ODIN) system for Surveillance of Occupational Stress and Mental Illness (SOSMI) (Collins & Gibbs, 2003). In fact, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, law enforcement officers have a life span eight to eleven years shorter than the average citizen. Also, specialists who study police suicide say the rate of suicide for police officers on a national scale is at least double that of the general population and possibly higher.

Stress originates from numerous places for police officers, which makes the understanding of police stress much more complex than examining a single aspect of the job. Policing is the subject of many studies that tend to focus more on the sensationalized aspects and trauma that officers may or may not experience in their career in law enforcement. While these

studies provide vital information on how situations like hostage standoffs, high speed chases, and terrorist attacks influence the stress levels of the responding officers, they do not always consider the day-to-day stressors that come along with the job. Interestingly enough, in the studies that did compare different types of stress within departments, it is not the operational aspects (risk of violence, exposure to traumatic events, shift work etc) which are usually perceived as the most stressful, but rather, organizational issues such as managerial structure and climate that cause the most stress (Collins & Gibbs, 2003). Because both organizational and operational stress affect a police officer's experience it is important to include both in any research on occupational stress for law enforcement officers.

Many researchers who look at law enforcement stress utilize a survey approach and contact large, municipal police departments for participants (Brooks & Piquero, 1998). Therefore, a plethora of knowledge on police stress within municipal departments exists. However, campus departments are often not sampled or considered due to their believed similarity to municipal departments.

Slowly, attention is turning to the differences between campus and municipal departments. Campus departments tend to have smaller operating budgets, may lack sophisticated technology or specialty units (K9, drug enforcement, special operations, etc) and face unique types of crime. Campuses have their own culture and unique sources of stress for a police officer. While both campus and municipal departments work to enforce the law, there is enough of a difference to warrant an examination of campus police.

Several studies have looked at how the sex of an officer may or may not influence stress levels within the setting of municipal departments but very little research regarding gender and



stress can be found for officers on university or college campuses (Burke, Richardsen & Martinussen, 2006; He, Zhao & Archbold, 2002; Lilly, Pole, Best, Metzler & Marmar 2009; Morash, Haarr & Kwak, 2006; Norvell, Hills & Murrin 1993). Similarly, when sex is looked at as it relates to stress, research is lacking in whether men and women officers experience or are affected differently from operational and organizational stress.

For these reasons I have decided to look at sex and setting as they relate to the organizational and operational stress of police officers.

### Statement of the Problem

Law enforcement officers have been identified as a population with one of the highest risks of psychological work stress. Psychological work stress is damaging both on an individual and an organizational level. However, if departments were better able to pinpoint potential stressors as well as identify those officers most susceptible to stress, preventive measures could be put in place to avoid the negative consequences that come along with the occupational stress experienced by law enforcement officers.

In response to this overwhelming need for research on police stress in policing, the National Institute of Justice created a program called Project Shield to probe the major law enforcement agencies on the consequences of occupational stress. The project found that indeed, psychological work stress could result in a number of adverse health outcomes. Dr. Robyn Gershon PhD. (2002), the author of the report, broke these adverse health outcomes into two groups, acute and chronic issues. She then further subdivided the two groups into psychological, physiological, and behavioral manifestations.

On an individual level acute stress can manifest itself psychologically through anxiety, general apathy, job dissatisfaction, loss of libido and psychosomatic concerns. Physiological symptoms experienced by the individual with acute work stress may include: dry mouth, excessive sweating, headaches, high blood pressure, hyperventilation, increased heart rate, insomnia, impaired memory and concentration, irritable bowel syndrome, hormonal disturbances, palpitations, upset stomach, and muscle pain. Finally, acute stress may manifest itself behaviorally by increased aggression, cynicism, depersonalization, over reliance on mind altering substances, and risk taking behaviors (Gershon, 2000).

If the stress that an individual is experiencing does not go away or is not properly dealt with, it can turn into chronic stress which presents its own set of problems for the individual. Psychologically the individual is more likely to experience “burn out,” Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), sexual impotence and even suicide. Physiologically an individual who is experiencing chronic stress may have manifestations including chronic back ache, heart disease, migraines, ulcers and weight gain/loss. Finally, the behavioral consequences of long term occupational stress on an individual may include: accidents, drug addiction and alcoholism, hyper-aggressiveness, violence, injuries, and interpersonal problems including marital and family problems (Gershon, 2000).

Occupational stress can also affect the organization in which the officer(s) work. Keiter, Hurrell, and Murphy (1995) explained how consequences of stress can be seen at an organizational level through: high rates of job dissatisfaction, low morale and productivity, high absenteeism and turnover, deviant behavior, high accident rates, poor public relations, and high incidences of lawsuits.

With the possibility of such severe consequences to the individual as well as the organization, police stress is an area that needs to be studied thoroughly so that programs can be implemented to prevent and appropriately deal with high levels of occupational stress.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this thesis was to examine how the demographics of sex and setting affect the stress levels of law enforcement officers. Finally, the thesis examined what aspects of the job, organizational or operational, led to more stress in each of the demographic categories.

### Significance of the Study

It is hoped that this research will provide greater understanding of the stress experienced by campus law enforcement officers and their municipal peers as well as add to literature addressing the differences between male and female officers in regards to occupational stress. Identifying the differences between campus and municipal departments, and also between male and female officers, can allow for preventive measures to be implemented and coping strategies to be taught at both the individual and organizational level. This possibility is further enhanced by pinpointing the most common types of stress (organizational or operational) experienced by each demographic.

### Definition of Terms

To fully understand the terminology in this study it is pertinent to define the following terms:

Stress: the experience of a perceived or real threat to mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being, resulting from a series of physiological responses and adaptations (Selye, 1946).

Municipal Officer: any police officer employed by a town or city. For this study, officers from Iowa City, Coralville, Ames, and Cedar Rapids municipal departments were surveyed.

Campus Officer: any police officer employed by a college or university. For this study the University of Iowa, University of Northern Iowa, and Iowa State University campus departments were surveyed.

Operational Police Stress: stress originating from the performance of police work. Typical sources include: shift work, working alone, and paperwork (McCreary & Thompson, 2006).

Organizational Police Stress: stress originating from the police department policies and procedures. Typical sources include: staff shortages, differences in leadership style, and a lack of resources (McCreary & Thompson, 2006).

### Research Questions

The research questions for this study will be:

1. Is there a significant difference between male and female police officers in regards to operational and organizational stress levels?
2. Is there a significant difference between municipal and campus police officers in regards to operational and organizational stress levels?

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

#### *Background on Stress*

For the purposes of this study stress will be defined as “the experience of a perceived or real threat to mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being, resulting from a series of physiological responses and adaptations” (Selye, 1946) while the threat or perceived threat that causes the series of physiological responses will be labeled a stressor. Stressors can either be short term, or acute stressors, or long-term, chronic stressors. In general, there are three categories of stressors: physical, psychological and social. The last two are much more subjective in nature and therefore not always as obvious to researchers looking to study stress.

According to stress researcher Hans Selye (1946), the body responds to stress in a predictable pattern. He called this stress response the general adaptation syndrome and broke it into three phases: alarm, resistance and exhaustion. In the alarm phase the body goes into fight-or-flight mode, activating the sympathetic nervous system and inhibiting the parasympathetic nervous system. Breathing, heart rate, and blood pressure are increased as the body releases hormonal secretions such as adrenaline and cortisol. Next, the body enters the resistance or adaptation phase where the body mobilizes its return back to some level of equilibrium despite the continued presence of the stressor. Finally, the last stage, known as the exhaustion phase, sets in if the stressor is still present. At this point, the body’s resources for fighting stress are depleted and the continued stress begins to damage the body.

If not taken care of appropriately acute stress can turn into chronic stress, which can damage nerve cells throughout the body’s tissues and organs. Particularly vulnerable is the

hippocampus section of the brain. When this section is damaged thinking and memory are likely to become impaired, along with increased levels of anxiety and depression. Along with these consequences, the autonomic nervous system can become affected, contributing to high blood pressure, heart disease, rheumatoid arthritis, and other stress related illnesses (Selye, 1946).

Due to severe consequences that stress can have on an individual it is not surprising that there is a growing urgency to look at stress in the workplace. Statistics from the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) show that 20% of workers feel 'very' or 'extremely' stressed at work, with some occupations having over 40% of workers that are stressed (Collins & Gibbs, 2003).

### *Stress and Policing*

While it is important to study the consequences of stress, this thesis looks specifically at stress experienced by law enforcement officers. Research has found that officers who experience high levels of stress commonly have poor health, are frequently absent from work, experience burnout, are dissatisfied with their jobs and suffer from increased chronic stress, depression, heart disease, stomach disorders, and alcohol/drug abuse. (Morash et al., 2006) Stress can be especially costly due its influence on early retirement and medical leave. One study found that 26% of medical retirement from policing is due to psychological ill health. Another finding: proportionately higher numbers of female officers are retiring on the grounds of psychological illness than male officers (Morash et al., 2006).

Policing is rated in the top three stressful occupations most commonly reported by both occupational physicians and psychiatrists in the Occupational Disease Intelligence Network (ODIN) system for Surveillance of Occupational Stress and Mental Illness (SOSMI) (Collins & Gibbs, 2003). It is interesting to note that in the majority of studies looking at stress and police

work, it is not the operational aspects (risk of violence, exposure to traumatic events) which are usually perceived as the most stressful, but rather, organizational issues such as managerial structure and climate that cause the most stress (Collins & Gibbs, 2003). Organizational or administrative aspects of police work were ranked as the leading cause of stress regardless of department size; however, officers in large departments experienced more stress due to this aspect of work than those in medium sized or small departments (Brooks & Piquero, 1998). Perhaps this is because large police departments are typically described as being paramilitary and bureaucratic with a strict ranking structure. This type of organizational model promotes separation between supervisors and subordinates which may negatively affect relationships within the department, leading to organizational/administrative stress. Data from Project Shield supports the idea that bureaucratic organization is a contributor to police stress. In their study, police officers ranked certain organizational and management aspects as particularly stressful; namely, authoritarianism, militarism, rigid supervision, shift-work, time pressures, work load, and bureaucratic red-tape (Gershon, 2000). Conversely, in smaller agencies there is less structure and more of an informal relationship between community members and officers as well as between supervisors and subordinates which could contribute to a more relaxed, supportive, environment and thus a reduced amount of stress (Brooks & Piquero, 1998). Taking department size into consideration, it is logical to look at police stress in various police agencies, including campus or university law enforcement.

### *The Role of Department Setting*

Campus police have existed since 1894 when Yale University hired two New Haven officers to watch over the campus. The biggest changes in campus policing happened during the 1960s and 1980s. Beginning in the 1940s, campuses everywhere had to compensate for World

War II veterans who began enrolling in college after the war. The 1960s brought the “baby boomers” surge, and this coupled with the social upheavals of the time, brought to light the need for enhanced size and responsibility of campus police forces. Some campus police departments achieved “official” legitimacy when states granted them full police powers in the 1960s and 1970s (Paoline & Sloan, 2003).

In the 1980s and 1990s campus police departments became more autonomous from their universities and developed similar organizational structures as municipal departments had in place. As Paoline (2003) noted “[campus police agencies] became even more autonomous; chief administrators were hired to oversee them and to create and implement new policies and programs aimed at enhancing their efficiency and effectiveness (including national-level accreditation); organizational specialization occurred; personnel standards were enhanced (including selection, training, and retention); and agencies focused their attention on increased efficiency in their crime fighting efforts” (p. 613).

Although perhaps similar in organizational structure to municipal agencies, there are issues that make policing a college campus unique. Sloan, Lanier, and Beer (2000) identified five such issues. Campus diversity is the first issue. With more females, African Americans and Hispanics attending college than ever before, campus police have to deal with diversity in a just and sensitive manner. Secondly, the physical design and location of a campus makes it unique to police. Campuses vary from being a small commuter campus to a large university. The setting can be in a rural community or an urban city, and the buildings may be grouped together on one main campus, or spread across several different towns. Thirdly, because of the unique lifestyles of many college students (parties, alcohol, drug use, etc) crime and victimization such as property crimes, sexual assault, rape and assaults become serious concerns. Along with this is



the fourth unique aspect of policing a college campus: the fear and perceived risk of victimization of staff, students and faculty members. Because college can be the first time away from home for many students, fear and perceived risk can be issues for both the students and their parents. Finally, with an increasing population on campuses, students with social and physical disorders are more prevalent and may require the assistance of police.

Another way in which campus police differ from their municipal counterparts is in the demographic makeup of the department. In a study that used data from the Survey of Campus Law Enforcement Agencies and the Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) Bromley and Reaves (1998) looked at various demographic characteristics of the two types of law enforcement agencies. Specifics of the study indicated that city police departments made less use of civilian personnel than campus agencies (23% vs. 37% of total staff), that campus police departments employed a higher proportion of female officers (14% vs. 5%) and the range of female officers employed by campus departments ranged from a low of 13.5% to a high of 17% whereas municipal departments ranged from 4.4% to 6.7%. The study also found that in general, campus agencies have higher educational requirements for their officers. Several questions come up when looking at this data: does the use of civilian personnel affect the stress levels of officers? What about educational attainment? These are both issues that were addressed in the current study.

### *The Role of Gender*

Besides examining factors that could contribute to the stress levels of officers within the two types of departments (municipal and campus), literature that addressed whether gender played a role in police stress was examined. Very little research regarding gender and stress can

be found for officers on a university campus. This provided a good opportunity to research an issue that was not well studied or examined, however it limited any review of literature to municipal departments as the setting of gender and stress based studies.

The question that most studies focused on was whether gender was correlated with police officer stress. While some studies found that female officers have statistically higher levels of stress than males (He, et al. 2002; Morash, et al., 2006), several found no difference, or not a statistically significant difference in stress. (Norvell, et al. 1993; Haarr & Morash, 1999) In a Meta analysis that compiled research from 33 articles published between 1996 and 2006, Poteyeva & Sun (2009) found some limited support for the existence of gender differences in job related stress; however the results were not overwhelmingly strong.

Although no statistically significant differences are found in most gender and police stress studies, it has been found that women and men face different stressors related to the work they do and the environment in which they work. Why might women experience different types of stress than males when it comes to their position as law enforcement officers? There are several explanations. One possible reason is the token status of women in law enforcement. Morash et al. (2006) explain: power differences between those possessing a master status and those who do not (i.e. the tokens) create special stressors for the tokens. They stand out from the crowd, are more visible than other workers and are therefore more open to observation, criticism, and exclusion from supportive work groups. Along with the idea of token status, the same study found that female officers have more problems with underestimated physical ability, perceived lack of influence on how police work is accomplished, bias, language harassment and sexual harassment. While male officers share a concern about lack of influence on how police work is accomplished with their female counterparts, they face their own unique stressors. Male officers

reported dealing with bias from coworkers and stigmatization based on appearance as two significant stressors that come along with the job.

Although few studies found large differences in stress between genders, the question remains why is it that women were found to experience more stress on average (no matter how small the difference)? Perhaps women simply report higher levels of distress because they are more ready to admit to personal difficulties than males. It has also been found that women officers tend to feel less self confident as officers than their male co-workers do; however, they view themselves as no less effective in their work (Norvell et al., 1993). Another proposed explanation: women may be predisposed to stress by personality type. Working women differ in personality from their non-working counterparts; while Type A personality is less common in women than men in the general population, this statistic does not hold true for the working population. This becomes important when Type A behavior is studied as it relates to stress. Typically, Type A behaviors (extreme competitiveness, aggressiveness, impatience, restlessness, hyper-alertness, explosiveness of speech, tenseness of muscles, etc.) have been correlated with perceived stress (Collins & Gibbs, 2003).

In terms of attitude and job satisfaction, there is only modest support for the claim that female officers have lower levels of job satisfaction. A study that looked at occupational burn out as it relates to gender, found that while both genders reported moderately high degrees of burnout, female officers expressed it differently from their male counterparts. For example, burnout in males was associated with depersonalization of civilians, while females were more likely to report feeling “drained” and “used” by their job. (Gershon, 2000) In other words, men externalized their burnout, females internalized it. However, because female and male officers have very similar views when it comes to the police role, community policing, citizen

cooperation and distrust, their levels of cynicism and in their receptivity or openness to organizational change, it has been suggested that occupational socialization is more powerful in molding officer's traits and attitudes than gender predisposition.

Due to the severity of the consequences that can result from occupational stress, it is necessary to look into aspects such as sex and setting that may contribute to officer stress and ill health.

## Chapter III

### Methodology

This study used survey research methodology. This tool was used to measure occupational stress experienced by police in two categories-Operational stress and organizational stress. A total of seven police departments participated. All Institutional Review Board guidelines were followed throughout the study.

#### *Participants*

The population for this study was defined as police officers and lieutenants from four municipal police departments and three campus police departments. In order to be eligible for the study participants were required to be sworn officers who were currently working at least one patrol shift a week. The surveys were sent to 93 campus police officers and 204 municipal officers. A total of 32 police officers responded to the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (27 males and 5 females; 21 municipal officers and 11 from campus departments). A total of 29 police officers responded to the Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (23 males and 6 females; 19 municipal officers and 10 from campus departments). Police officers were contacted via email addresses listed on the city or university website. The Operational Police Stress Questionnaire and the Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire were not sent out directly to each officer; rather at the bottom of the cover letter were two links that led the officer to each of the two surveys. Each officer was then emailed the cover letter explaining that the survey was voluntary and anonymous. The cover letter is attached in the appendix.

### *Procedures*

All officer personnel listed on each city or university's website was solicited to participate through email. Each officer was emailed the cover letter explaining that the survey was voluntary and anonymous. Participants were given a standard set of direction in the cover letter and then completed the surveys on their own time. Data collection was accomplished through self-administered questionnaires. In addition to basic demographic questions, participants completed the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op) and the Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Org). The Operational Police Stress Questionnaire and the Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire were not sent out directly to each officer; rather at the bottom of the cover letter were two links that led the officer to each of the two surveys. The cover letter and both questionnaires are attached in the appendix.

### *Measures*

The Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op) and the Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Org) have been proven as reliable measurements of police stress. The PSQ-Op and PSQ-Org are both 20-items each and can be used either separately or together. The short length of each PSQ helps to reduce the burden placed on officers completing them and allows researchers greater flexibility (in terms of focusing on either operational or organizational stress, if they so desire). Police officers respond to the measures using a 7-point Likert-like scale ranging from "no stress at all" (1) to "a lot of stress" (7). Higher scores on the measure indicate a greater level of perceived policing stress. Each PSQ is scored by summing or averaging the 20 items from each to create separate PSQ-OP and PSQ-Org scale scores. Both surveys are attached in the appendix. Along with the surveys there were questions regarding demographic

variables. The three demographic questions asked the respondent to identify their gender and the classification of the department they work for (municipal or campus), along with four categories to choose from representing the number of years on the force (0-5, 6-10, 11-20 or 20+).

In the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op) problems with stress are conceptualized as originating from the “operational” aspects, such as performing the job. Furthermore, this measure accounts for the relationship between work and home life, often missed in other police stress scales.

The Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Org) is another measure designed to capture stressful events as they relate to police officers. Stressful events in policing, in this scale, are conceptualized as originating from the “organizational” aspects, such as dealing with supervisors.

The online survey host used to collect data responses was Zoomerang, which is an internet survey research site. In order to preserve the reliability and validity of each survey, both were uploaded to Zoomerang without any change in content or design.

### *Statistical Analysis*

In order to determine whether a statistically significant difference exists between variables, it is necessary to compare the means of the dependent variable as it relates to the independent variable. For this thesis, the dependent variable is the stress level of officers (either organizational or operational) while the independent variables are gender (male or female) and setting (campus or municipal departments).

An unpaired t test was used to evaluate gender and setting differences in both types of occupational stress. All data were analyzed using the statistical analysis program SPSS 17.0.

## Chapter IV

## Results

In this chapter the data analysis for 61 completed occupational stress surveys is presented. Each research question is examined separately and the appropriate analysis results are reported for each.

Table 1

*Comparison of operational and organizational stress between male and female officers*

	Male		Female		t-test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Operational Stress	3.19	.98	3.20	.85	.984
Organizational Stress	2.88	.96	3.00	1.29	.802

$p \leq 0.05$

Research Question 1-Is there a significant difference between male and female police officers in regards to occupational stress levels? Table 1 presents the means for male and female officers in regards to both operational and organizational stress. The independent samples t test for the question addressing whether there was a difference between operational stress levels of male and female officers was found to be not statistically significant,  $t(30)=-.02$ ,  $p=.984$ . These results indicate that male ( $M=3.19$ ,  $SD=.98$ ) and female ( $M=3.20$ ,  $SD=.85$ ) officers experienced roughly the same levels of operational stress.

Likewise, the independent samples t test addressing whether there was a difference between organizational stress levels of male and female officers was found to be not statistically



significant,  $t(27)=-.25$ ,  $p=.802$ . These results indicate that male ( $M=2.88$ ,  $SD=.96$ ) and female ( $M=3.00$ ,  $SD=1.29$ ) officers experienced roughly the same levels of operational stress.

Table 2

*Comparison of operational and organizational stress between campus and municipal officers*

	Campus		Municipal		t-test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Operational Stress	3.69	.58	2.94	1.01	.030
Organizational Stress	3.55	.78	2.57	.97	.010

$p \leq 0.05$

Research Question 2-Is there a significant difference between campus and municipal police officers in regards to occupational stress levels? Table 2 presents the means for campus and municipal officers in regards to both operational and organizational stress. The independent samples t test for the question addressing whether there was a difference between operational stress levels of campus and municipal officers was found to be statistically significant,  $t(30)=-2.274$ ,  $p=.030$ . These results indicate that campus officers ( $M=3.69$ ,  $SD=.575$ ) report more operational stress than municipal officers ( $M=2.936$ ,  $SD=1.01$ ).

Likewise, the independent stress t test addressing whether there was a difference between organizational stress levels of campus and municipal officers was found to be statistically significant,  $t(27)=-2.764$ ,  $p=.010$ . These results indicate that campus officers ( $M=3.55$ ,  $SD=.785$ ) report more organizational stress than municipal officers ( $M=2.566$ ,  $SD=.969$ ).

## Chapter V

### Discussion

It is apparent that while the setting in which law enforcement officers work plays a role in both operational and organizational stress, gender does not. Contrary to what previous research has indicated, operational stress appears to be more prominent than organizational stress for both males and females as well as both campus and municipal officers.

There are several possible explanations for the significant difference found between campus and municipal officers in operational stress. As mentioned earlier, the role of the campus police officer has evolved over time. This has caused some growing pains for the campus departments including the retention of several of the more menial tasks (key control on campus, providing security for nuclear or bio-hazardous facilities on campus, etc) while at the same time officers' roles are ever expanding to less routine duties including violence intervention, sexual assault investigation and crime control. The broadening of the task scope of officers could contribute to the operational stress level involved in campus policing. Not only are campus officers asked to complete the same duties as municipal officers, but also continue to provide security and routine services that are unique to the campus environment.

Another possible explanation for difference between municipal and campus officers in terms of operational stress could be that because campus officers experience less traumatic events (homicides, car accidents, etc), that when such an event occurs the officer is more likely to view it as stressful or traumatizing. In other words, perhaps the frequency of which an officer experiences a particular situation plays a role in how stressful the officer views the situation to be.

Campuses also bring about unique challenges because of the population that police are working with. Campus officers often find themselves dealing with a portion of the population (age-wise) that is on their own for the first time and may be rebelling against any type of parental

or other adult supervision. This attitude, combined with the high usage of alcohol in college age students, can create headaches for campus officers who have to deal with situations involving such students. Along with age and alcohol availability, another unique feature that campus police must address is the high student turnover rate. Unlike a municipal department where the same people can be brought in time and time again and officers come to know what to expect from certain neighborhoods, campus departments do not have this luxury. Every year a significant portion (roughly 25%) of the community of which the police are in charge, leave the area and are replaced by a new group of freshman who are unknown to the police. This turnover does not allow for patterns to be established or specific individuals to be pinpointed as being persistent trouble makers. Instead, every year campus officers are being introduced to a new population of students that may or may not be around for the next four years. Obviously the unknown can be stressful-especially when you are dealing with a portion of the population that is own their own for the first time and may be exploring alcohol, drugs, sex, etc for the first time.

As mentioned previously the majority of university and college law enforcement agencies do not have the specialized units that their municipal counterparts do. This may lead to extra stress when it comes to dealing with issues that otherwise would be handled using a specialized unit such as the K-9 unit, a bomb squad, or a drug/gang task force. The lack of specialized units means that a campus police officer must be knowledgeable and capable of responding to all incidents regardless of how serious or unique they may be. Along with the lack of specialized units, campus police officers are more likely to patrol alone, whereas municipal officers will occasionally have a partner to ride along with. Having a partner along on patrol can create camaraderie and trust among officers and may allow for responsibilities to be shared and therefore less perceived stress by individual officers.

The number of total officers in a unit can also play a role in the organizational stress levels of officers. For instance, campus officers may have more organizational stress than municipal officers because they are more likely to carry out both administrative and patrol duties whereas larger departments may be able to assign officers specifically to one area or another. This double responsibility may influence both the operational and organizational stress levels of campus police officers.

Another possible reason for the different organizational stress levels between campus and municipal officers is the fact that campus departments didn't 'start from scratch' like the municipal departments so long ago. Instead, campus departments may have adopted their organizational style from municipal departments of the time. During the 1980s and 90s the prevailing organizational structure of municipal departments was the professional model of policing which has since been changed to community oriented policing. It could be that campus departments adopted the professional model of policing as they were beginning to assert themselves as legitimate policing agencies in the 1980s and 90s, and never changed to community oriented policing as their municipal counterparts had. Therefore simply as a result of timing, campus departments could have adopted a soon-to-be-outdated model for police organization which very well could be leading to more organizational stress among officers.

Finally, campus police departments are constantly striving to be seen as equal to their municipal counterparts, yet this respect has come slowly. For instance the University of Northern Iowa police department was only recently given firearms within the last two years. By not arming police it sends a message that campus officers are somehow 'less than' municipal officers. Certainly, stress levels of officers may be heightened by working in a department that

constantly has to strive to be seen as legitimate and authoritative, even while carrying out the same duties as the officers that are seen by the community as being legitimate.

The majority of prior research has failed to find a meaningful difference between genders when it comes to stress and policing. The same was true for this study; although females averaged slightly higher in both operational and organizational stress, the difference between genders was non-significant. There are several possible reasons that male and female officers did not report statistically significant differences in either operational or organizational stress.

As laws have developed addressing issues such as equal hiring policies and sexual harassment, female officers may feel more welcome or at least protected in their line of work. Also, because of the requirements for equal opportunity hiring processes more women are entering the workforce, not just as police officers, but across all professions. With more female co-workers, female officers may feel more comfortable expressing their opinions or asserting themselves and male officers may be getting used to working in a co-ed environment.

While this research provides new statistics for an area of law enforcement literature that is not well examined, the variation among stress and department setting at the campus and municipal levels, it does have limitations. The sample used was relatively small and all departments were located within the state of Iowa. Therefore results may not be representative of departments outside the state or outside the Midwest. Another weakness of the study was the inability to specifically identify non-responders in order to allow both a second email and a more in depth look at responder bias. It is possible that the officers that did not respond are somehow different than those that did. Perhaps the non responders experience more stress or have more negative feelings about the job, or maybe they are perfectly content and do not experience stress

at all in regards to policing. It is impossible to know without being able to look more closely at non-response bias.

The research in this thesis suggests that it is the environment and outside factors, and not internal or gender-based differences that account for stress in law enforcement officers. This is not altogether disappointing, in fact, with this information, future research can be done to further pinpoint the stressful aspects of policing. Armed with this information supervisors can implement new strategies and approaches to the operational and organizational policies which may lower police stress.

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Appendix A  
Letter of Consent

Dear ...

You are invited to participate in a study of the effects that sex and setting have on occupational police stress. I hope to learn if differences exist in police stress amongst municipal and campus police agencies and/or between male and female officers. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your status as a sworn police officer.

If you decide to participate, please click on the [zoomerang.com](http://zoomerang.com) link which will take you to the surveys. Your completion of these surveys is completely optional. The survey is designed to look at the differences between sex and setting on the organizational and operational stress police officers experience. It will take about ten minutes to complete the two surveys. No benefits accrue to you for answering the survey, but your responses will be used to provide necessary information to improve training and counseling for officers which will help prevent burnout, improve overall performance, and better incorporate women's needs in the field of law enforcement. Any discomfort or inconvenience to you derives only from the amount of time taken to complete the survey.

Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used, but no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent electronically. Your name will not be included on any documents. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study is confidential and will not be disclosed.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relationships with the University of Northern Iowa. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice. By clicking on the link to the survey, you are indicating that you are fully aware of the nature and extent of your participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it. By completing the survey you are agreeing to participate in the research and acknowledge that you are 18 years of age or older. Please print a copy of this form for your records or future reference.

If you have questions about the study or desire more information in the future regarding your participation or the study generally, you may contact Laura Lundell (319) 400-4635, or the Dr. Sunde Nesbit at the Department of Psychology, University of Northern Iowa, (319) 273-6776. You can also contact the office of the IRB Administrator, University of Northern Iowa, (319) 273-6148 for answers to questions about the rights of research participants and the participant review process.

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Thank you for your time.  
Sincerely,  
*Laura Anne Lundell*

University of Northern Iowa student  
Psychology/Criminology major

Appendix B

Operational Police Stress Questionnaire

## Operational Police Stress Questionnaire

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

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

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

The Operational Police Stress Questionnaire is provided free for non-commercial, educational, and research purposes.

Appendix C

Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire

## Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire

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

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

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

The Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire is provided free for non-commercial, educational, and research purposes.