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EXPLORING THE MARITAL CONFLICT OF POLICE OFFICERS: THE ROLES OF
JOB STRESS, JOB BURNOUT, AND WORK-TO-FAMILY CONFLICT

by

Shannon Marie Morley
Bachelor of Arts, Northern Illinois University, 2011

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

Grand Forks, North Dakota

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This thesis is being submitted by the appointed advisory committee as having met all of the requirements of the Graduate School at the University of North Dakota and is hereby approved.

Wayne Swisher
Dean of the Graduate School

04-24-2013

Title Exploring the Marital Conflict of Police Officers: The Roles of Job Stress, Job Burnout, and Work-to-Family Conflict

Department Sociology

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Shannon M. Morley
04-11-2013

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ABSTRACT

Previous scholarship suggests that the nature of policing is stressful and has important implications for the marital quality of police officers. Given the stresses inherent in policing, the purpose of this study is to examine how job stress, job burnout, and work-to-family conflict experienced by male and female police officers impact the likelihood of experiencing marital conflict; the potential mediating role of work-to-family conflict is also examined. This thesis also explores gender differences that may exist in the experience of these variables.

Data from the 1995 Work and Family Services for Law Enforcement Personnel in the United States study was utilized ($N = 1137$; $N = 95$ females and 1042 males), and OLS regression was used to test the hypotheses. The results indicate that as job stress increases for female police officers, marital conflict also increases. It was found that job stress, job burnout, and work-to-family conflict all had positive and significant relationships with marital conflict among male police officers. Results also suggest that work-to-family conflict does not mediate the relationships between job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict for male and female police officers. The implications of the results of this thesis suggest the need for more programs to be available to police officers, especially male police officers, whose work-to-family conflict might be impacting their marital conflict.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Chapter

The purpose of this thesis is to explore whether job stress and job burnout impact the likelihood of experiencing marital conflict among police officers. This thesis will also examine if work-to-family conflict mediates the relationship between job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict. Additionally, this thesis will explore if any gender differences in these relationships come into play. Chapter One will introduce the reader to the topic of this thesis, including the thesis goals and the importance of this topic. The researcher will also give a brief description of police officers as well as an overview of the next four chapters of this thesis.

Introduction and Goal of Thesis

The relationship between work and family life has become a major concern for employees and employers alike spurring much research on the topic (Howard, Donofrio, and Boles 2004). Much of the existing work-family literature details job stressors that have been shown to contribute to work-to-family conflict, such as lack of job flexibility and lack of supervisor support (Howard, Donofrio, and Boles 2004; Stewart 2013). Research has also examined the consequences of experiencing work-to-family conflict, such as emotional exhaustion and disintegration of personal and familial relationships (Howard, Donofrio, and Boles 2004; Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005). Marital satisfaction has also been shown to be negatively impacted by work-to-family conflict.

For instance, when spouses bring home their stresses and negative moods from the workday, it makes communication difficult due to the inability to regulate emotions (Story and Repetti 2006). Research has also begun to explore the work-family conflict of people in specific occupations in order to obtain a more contextual understanding of work-to-family conflict. For example, the experiences of doctors and nurses have been studied (Montgomery, Panagopolou, and Benos 2006; Pines and Keinan 2005), but the experiences of individuals in other occupations that are high-stress and gender-atypical remain under-examined. Because police work is a male-dominated and high-stress occupation (Brough and Frame 2004; Burke 1994; Roberts and Levenson 2001), it is important to study the impact of work-to-family conflict among police officers. Doing so provides researchers with a fuller understanding of how context can shape the experience of work-to-family conflict.

Job burnout has been shown to be prevalent among police officers (Maslach and Jackson 1981; Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005). Research has also shown that jobs that involve high stress levels, low flexibility, and low environmental support contribute to work-to-family conflict (Howard, Donofrio, and Boles 2004; Stewart 2013). The experiences of job stress and job burnout can also be especially important in gendered contexts. Police officers occupy one of the most demanding and high stress occupations in the US, and policing is also a traditionally male-dominated profession characterized by few women (Brough and Frame 2004; Burke 1994; Burke and Mikkelsen 2004; Roberts and Levenson 2001; Zhao, Thurman, and He 1999). Indeed, females account for roughly 15% of all police officers (Purvanova and Muros 2010).

Considering that police officers are at a higher risk for divorce (Roberts and Levenson 2001; Hall et al. 2010) and that stressful jobs in general lead to greater marital conflict (Story and Repetti 2006), the marital conflict of police officers is an important topic to study. This thesis contributes to the existing body of literature by its use of marital conflict as a dependent variable. According to Dush and Taylor (2012) there is comparatively less research that uses marital conflict as a dependent variable, instead marital conflict is most often used as an independent variable in examinations of marital satisfaction. Hence, this study helps to further scholarly understanding of predictors of marital conflict.

Cullen and colleagues (1985) call police stress an occupational hazard, but more importantly, a social problem. This is because how police officers cope with their stress has the ability to impact interactions with the public and how laws are upheld. The actions of law enforcement agencies also have the capacity to impact changes to public policy. The lives of police officers have been widely researched in the past years; however, most researchers have focused on how workplace characteristics—such as supervisor support, job flexibility, and/or job satisfaction—impact the experience of stress among police officers (Lester et al. 1981; Martinussen, Richardson, and Burke 2007; Zhao, Thurman, and He 1999). The marital conflict of police officers remains under-examined, and the research that does exist in this area tends to ignore the role of work-to-family conflict (Roberts and Levenson 2001). Indeed, there is little to no research that looks at the relationships between job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, and marital conflict among police officers. With this background in mind, the goal of this thesis is to examine if job stress and job burnout predict marital conflict

among police officers, using work-to-family conflict as a mediating variable. In other words, do job stress and job burnout impact marital conflict among police officers by affecting work-to-family conflict? This thesis will also identify if there are gender differences when it comes to how job stress, job burnout, and work-to-family conflict relate to police officers' marital conflict. In doing so, this thesis contributes to the larger scholarship in the areas of work-to-family conflict, job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict by examining the specific context of policing.

Overview of Police Officers

Married police officers were chosen to be the topic of this thesis due to the inherent stressfulness of police work and the effects that high stress occupations can have on familial and personal interactions. As such, it is helpful to provide an overview of some difficulties that accompany police work. The stressful nature of police work leads not only to job burnout, but also to a variety of negative consequences, such as poor physical health, negative psychological outlooks, and poor work performance (Burke 1994). Law enforcement is also characterized by many work characteristics that negatively affect police officers, such as shift work and contact with the public that is often confrontational (Burke 1994; Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005; Wu 2009). Negative aspects of policing can also be heightened when there are bureaucratic interferences and unsupportive coworkers and supervisors (Wu 2009).

Although there are other high stress occupations, police officers often have to deal with situations that other occupations may not, including the daily threat of violence (Howard, Donofrio, and Boles 2004; Wu 2009). Police officers also experience what is called "burst stress," which refers to a period of low stress that suddenly transitions into a

high stress situation (Howard, Donofrio, and Boles 2004). Job burnout has been identified as a consequence of such chronic work stress (Pines and Keinan 2005), which often manifests itself in the form of irritability, depression, and withdrawal (Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005). It can also be difficult for police officers to leave work at work. As such, police officers often carry negative feelings and stresses home and into interactions with their families (Maslach and Jackson 1981). This experience of work-to-family conflict is not unique to policing, but police officers may be especially vulnerable to work-to-family conflict due to the dangerous and stressful nature of their work (Alexander and Walker 1996). The image of what a successful police officer looks like, such as being tough and having total dedication to the job, can also inhibit the amount of time police officers have to spend with their spouses and/or children (Howard, Donofrio, and Boles 2004). Spouses of police officers also face negative impacts upon their health and social lives as result of the stressful nature of police work (Alexander and Walker 1996). The stress that is inherent to policing not only affects the officers, but their families as well.

Gender also has a role to play in how job stress, job burnout, and work-to-family conflict impact marital conflict among police officers. In the US, police officers tend to be white and male; however, there is a growing population of racial minority and female officers (Brough and Frame 2004; Zhao, Thurman, and He 1999). Because of the gender gap that still exists in police work, most research is done from an androcentric view, meaning that studies about police work have tended to sample mostly male police officers, thus missing the perspective of female police officers (Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005). The dimension of working in a male-dominated occupation may also add

extra stress to an already stressful environment for women. Research has speculated that women are more prone to job burnout than men; however, this topic among police officers has been sparsely studied with inconsistent findings (Purvanova and Muros 2010). Some research suggests that female police officers—and female employees in general—experience more work-to-family conflict than male police officers because they are generally responsible for the maintenance of the household and children (Janzen, Muhajarine, and Kelly 2007; Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005). Given this situation, it becomes important to ask if job stress, job burnout, and work-to-family conflict relate to the marital conflict of male and female police officers differently.

Research Questions

To summarize, the first research question of this study is: to what extent does the job stress and job burnout experienced by police officers impact marital conflict? This study also asks: does work-to-family conflict mediate the relationships between job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict? Lastly, a research question concerning gender is proposed: do female and male police officers have different experiences in terms of how job stress, job burnout, and work-to-family conflict relate to marital conflict? This thesis enhances the existing literature by examining multiple contributors—job stress, job burnout, and work-to-family conflict—to marital conflict among police officers. This thesis also contributes to the existing literature by exploring gender differences that may exist in the experiences of police officers. Doing so provides us with one window into understanding how specific contexts shape work-family dynamics.

Organization of the Remainder of the Thesis

This chapter introduced the topic of police officers' marital conflict in relation to job stress, job burnout, and work-to-family conflict. This chapter also explained the benefits of studying this particular group of workers, and provided a brief overview of the topic. Chapter Two will delve into previous literature on the topic, define concepts, and explore the theoretical orientation that guides this thesis. Chapter Three will detail information about the questionnaire used in this quantitative study, as well as the methodology used by the researcher. Results of the statistical analysis will be revealed in Chapter Four. Chapter Five will discuss the results of the study in relation to previous studies, as well as the limitations of the study and ideas for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this thesis is to explore whether job stress and job burnout impact the likelihood of police officers experiencing marital conflict. The role of work-to-family conflict as a potential mediating variable between job stress and job burnout in predicting police officers' marital conflict is also examined. This thesis also explores gender patterns that may exist in how the independent variables relate to police officers' marital conflict. This chapter serves to explain the theoretical orientation of this thesis and the previous literature on the topic. Based on the theory and literature that is reviewed, hypotheses are proposed.

Theoretical Orientation

Role Theory

Role theory posits that everyone has social roles characterized by certain expectations (Stewart 2013; Wu 2009). People's roles then become a blueprint for their obligations, with "role strain" occurring when individuals have difficulty meeting the obligations of one role (Goode 1960; Marshall 1998). The clash that occurs when there are inconsistent demands from two or more roles is referred to as role conflict (McIntyre 2011; Witt 2012). For example, a female police officer might experience role conflict because working late leads to her being unable to spend time with her husband. Tiedje and colleagues (1990) state that when individuals possess multiple roles, role conflict is not only inevitable, but it is also considered normal.

In conjunction with role theory, the scarcity hypothesis posits that one has only so much time and energy per day to use, which can cause conflict between roles (Barnett 2008; MacDermid 2005; Marks 1977; Marshall and Barnett 1993). This conflict between roles occurs because the amount of time and energy spent on one role affects how much time and energy is left to spend on other roles (Barnett 2008). Based on the scarcity hypothesis, it seems unavoidable that work and family will conflict with one another (Barnett 2008). Work-family conflict, a type of role conflict, is defined as conflict arising from incompatibility meeting the demands of work and family; what occurs in one domain has the potential to negatively affect the other (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; Russell, Swody, and Barnes-Farrell 2012; Stewart 2013; Voydanoff 2005).

Work-family conflict has two forms. Family-to-work conflict is when an individual's family life interferes with his/her work, while work-to-family conflict—the form studied in this thesis—occurs when an individual's work interferes with his or her family life (Russell, Swody, and Barnes-Farrell 2012; Stewart 2013). For example, a police officer would be experiencing work-to-family conflict if s/he had to miss an anniversary dinner with his/her spouse because an important case came up. The potential for lack of compatibility between work and family is the reason that this thesis explores how work-to-family conflict shapes the marital conflict of police officers. It also considers how two workplace variables—job burnout and job stress—might negatively impact marital outcomes.

The behavioral expectations for societal roles emphasized by role theory are especially relevant for police officers because they hold social roles that have rigid

expectations (Wu 2009). Police officers are expected to behave in a fashion above and beyond what is expected of normal citizens in order to be worthy of public trust (Wu 2009). In fact, many officers see total dedication to the job as the only way to ascend in rank (Howard, Donofrio, and Boles 2004). Certain aspects of police work—such as long hours and shift work—contribute to conflict between work and family. Further, it is difficult for police officers to dedicate the same amount of time to both work and family, especially when they often do not have control over their cases (Howard, Donofrio, and Boles 2004; Russell, Swody, and Barnes-Farrell 2012; Wu 2009). Work-to-family conflict may be especially prevalent among police officers because key precursors to work-to-family conflict—such as stress, lack of flexibility, and working long hours—are central characteristics of police work (Burke 1994; Russell, Swody, and Barnes-Farrell 2012; Stewart 2013; Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005; Wu 2009). Role conflict can lead to lower levels of marital satisfaction, lower levels of life satisfaction, and other negative outcomes (Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005). Hence, this thesis uses role theory to explore how job stress, job burnout, and work-to-family conflict impact marital conflict among police officers.

Previous Literature

The remaining portion of this chapter will provide a review of the existing body of literature concerning job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, marital conflict, and gender issues in policing. The first body of literature provides an overview of marital conflict, including a working definition of this term. The independent variables of job stress, job burnout, and work-to-family conflict are then discussed. A discussion of

gender and policing then follows. Last, the demographic control variables will be outlined.

Marital Conflict

Marital conflict is defined as interactions between spouses in which a difference of opinion takes place (Cummings and Davies 2011). Marital conflict includes aggression, verbal attacks, marital withdrawal, physical attacks, defensiveness, and non-verbal aggressive acts, such as passive-aggressiveness (Cummings and Davies 2011; Faircloth et al. 2011; Mattson, Frame, and Johnson 2011). Mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion are outcomes of marital conflict (Kulik 2002). Cummings and Davies (2002) state that a certain amount of conflict in marriage is normal and unavoidable, but high levels of it can be damaging. Marital conflict is important to examine because of the negative consequences it can have on the psychological health of the whole family. For example, couples who are experiencing marital conflict are at a higher risk for depressive symptoms, which in turn, could lead to more marital conflict (Poyner-Del Vento and Cobb 2011). Children of parents who experience marital conflict often experience difficulties regulating emotions, aggression, delinquency, and other negative psychological outcomes during their adolescence (Cummings and Davies 2002; Lucas-Thompson 2012; Miga, Gdula, and Allen 2011). These children are also at risk of experiencing marital conflict in their own marriages as adults (Topham, Larson, and Holman 2005).

Due to the importance of examining not only the marital conflict among police officers, but also the general public, this thesis will provide a broad overview of the literature on marital conflict. Such an overview of marital conflict is also given because

of the lack of literature available that specifically addresses marital conflict among police officers. Popular belief holds that marriages and relationships will be successful if both parties are committed and work hard to sustain the relationship (Buck and Neff 2012); however, many people underestimate the importance of external stressors (in this thesis— job burnout and job stress) and demographic variables. Indeed, marital conflict has been found to arise when there are differences in lifestyles (e.g. occupation) and demographic characteristics (e.g. educational attainment) among spouses (Leggett et al. 2012). As such, previous research has shown that couples who differ in terms of race, age, education, religion, socioeconomic status, and other demographic characteristics have a higher likelihood of experiencing conflict in their marriages (Lucas et al. 2004; Zhang, Ho, and Yip 2012). Pertaining to age, the likelihood of marital conflict is especially high if the female is significantly older than the male (Lichter 1990; Zhang, Ho, and Yip 2012). Education can also play a role in marital conflict, particularly if the female has a higher level of education than her husband (Lucas et al. 2004; Zhang, Ho, and Yip 2012). Couples tend to have lower levels of marital conflict when the husband has a higher level of education; however, the likelihood of experiencing marital conflict increases when the wife is also highly educated (Lucas et al. 2004). In general, homogenous married couples tend to experience lower levels of marital conflict than other couples (Zhang, Ho, and Yip 2012).

Job Burnout and Marital Conflict

Job burnout is defined as emotional exhaustion, cynicism, depersonalization, or feelings of low personal accomplishment related to paid work (Maslach and Jackson 1981). Negative self-reflections, irritability, depression and withdrawal have also been

identified as indicators of job burnout (Ifeagwazi 2006; Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005). Job burnout can affect one's physical health by causing gastrointestinal issues, headaches, and hypertension (Rosenberg and Pace 2006). Job burnout is not exclusive to time spent at work, but can flow into other domains (Lingard and Francis 2005). As such, manifested symptoms of job burnout (irritability, withdrawal, depression) can lead problems in both familial and personal relationships (Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005). Indeed, experiencing job burnout has been shown to be correlated to experiencing marital issues, such as increased angry interactions with spouses (Hawkins 2001).

Given the vulnerability of police officers to job burnout (Alexander and Walker 1996), they may experience high levels of marital conflict. Research has found that police officers experiencing psychological job burnout tended to be absent from family decisions, have unsatisfactory marriages, and overall complicated interactions with their families (Burke 1994; Hawkins 2001). In a study conducted about police officers and their wives, Hawkins (2001) found that police officers who were experiencing job burnout were more likely to report marital conflict with their wives and anger with their children than the officers who were not experiencing job burnout. Much research has been documented on job burnout in various occupations, as well as the negative work-to-family conflict it is associated with, but few studies have examined the relationship between job burnout and marital conflict (Hall et al. 2010; Martinussen, Richardsen, and Burke 2007; Pines et al. 2011; Roberts and Levenson 2001). Overall, job burnout has been shown to lead to a variety of negative outcomes, including marital conflict. Based on the existing literature and role theory, the first hypothesis is proposed:

H₁: Job burnout will be positively associated with marital conflict among police officers.

Job Stress and Marital Conflict

Job stress is defined as the “harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when job requirements do not match the worker’s capabilities, resources, and needs” (Park 2007, p. 5). Job stress can manifest itself in the form of emotional issues, such as anger, depression, anxiety, and withdrawal from spouse (Matthews, Conger, and Wickrama 1996). In congruence with the symptoms of job burnout, symptoms of job stress include lack of motivation, lack of production, and various health issues (Park 2007). A study conducted in 1996 by Alexander and Walker sought to identify consequences of police work from spouses’ points of view. The results of their study showed that the stress of police work not only impacted relationships within the family, but also impacted other personal relationships (Alexander and Walker 1996). The stress of police work also showed a negative impact on marriage and the spouses’ health and social life (Alexander and Walker 1996).

Individuals in couples who experience work-related stress are at risk for lower marital support, greater marital conflict, and lower marital satisfaction (Story and Repetti 2006). Stress can make it hard for a spouse to be engaged in responding to important marital issues, even if that spouse truly wants the marriage to be successful (Buck and Neff 2012). During times of high stress, spouses are more likely to blame each other for issues contributing to marital conflict (Buck and Neff 2012). Research has shown that individuals who are stressed tend to have negative marital interactions that result in marital conflict (Matthews, Conger, and Wickrama 1996). In a 2001 study on police couples, Roberts and Levenson found that stress was “toxic” to marriages, even more so

than physical exhaustion. In line with the existing research, the second hypothesis is proposed:

H₂: Job stress will be positively associated with marital conflict among police officers.

Work-to-Family Conflict and Marital Conflict

Work-family conflict is defined as inter-role conflict that occurs when there is incompatibility in meeting the demands of work and family (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; Russell, Swody, and Barnes-Farrell 2012; Stewart 2013). Work and family are interconnected domains, with what happens in one domain affecting the other (Voydanoff 2005). The potential for lack of compatibility between work and family life has become a major concern for employers and employees alike, especially with the increase in dual-earner families and female participation in the labor market (Howard, Donofrio, and Boles 2004). Work-family conflict is used to describe conflict that exists between work life and family life without specifying direction. Because many researchers want to highlight precursors and outcomes of conflict between work and family, most tend to specify the direction of such conflict. Work-to-family conflict, the focus of this thesis, occurs when an individual's work interferes with his or her family life (Russell, Swody, and Barnes-Farrell 2012; Stewart 2013). Because police officers occupy a demanding job characterized by long hours (Burke 1994; Russell, Swody, and Barnes-Farrell 2012; Stewart 2013; Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005; Wu 2009), this thesis examines work-to-family conflict. Spouses experiencing negative spillover from work tend to also experience marital conflict (Voydanoff 2004). This could be because the lingering negativity from work may become unintentionally directed at the spouse during interactions.

It may be particularly hard for police officers to find a balance between work and family due to characteristics inherent in police work, such as the threat of violence and stress (Burke 1994; Howard, Donofrio, and Boles 2004; Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005; Wu 2009). Additionally, long work hours, shift work, and the possibility of being denied leave can make it difficult for police officers to juggle work and family life (Wu 2009). Police officers may see total dedication to the job as the only way to advance in rank, thereby causing stress for police officers who have families (Howard, Donofrio, and Boles 2004). Work-to-family conflict can also heighten tension between spouses that contributes to marital conflict (Cowlshaw, Evans, and McLennan 2010). Working long hours is not only a predictor of work-to-family conflict, but also marital conflict (Barnett and Gareis 2006). Research has also shown that often it is not the actual length of hours a spouse works (i.e. being away from the family) that can lead to marital conflict, instead it is often the negative emotions that are carried back into family life (Roberts and Levenson 2001). Because research has suggested that work-to-family conflict can negatively impact familial relationships, the third hypothesis is proposed:

H₃: Work-to-family conflict will be positively associated with marital conflict among police officers.

It may also be the case that job stress and job burnout impact marital conflict by leading to higher levels of work-to-family conflict. Indeed, previous research has indicated that burned out police officers experience high levels work-to-family conflict, and stress is often regarded as a contributor to work-to-family conflict (Howard, Donofrio, and Boles 2004; Stewart 2013; Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005). As such,

job stress and job burnout may impact marital conflict through increasing work-to-family conflict. Hence, the fourth hypothesis is proposed.

H₄: Work-to-family conflict will mediate the relationships between job stress, job burnout, and the marital conflict of police officers.

Gender and Policing

Female participation in the police force has risen over the past decade, but there is still a remarkable gender gap (Brough and Frame 2004). Indeed, women account for roughly 15% of all police officers (Purvanova and Muros 2010). When women first broke the barriers into police work, they started out as social workers, protecting children and other women (Cuadrado 1995). In 1972 under the Equal Employment Opportunity Act women were permitted to become full-fledged police officers. It is hypothesized that this change from a nurturing role to facing crime head on with the same authority as their male counterparts is the reason that many female officers today face prejudice in the workplace (Cuadrado 1995). This could be because women are thought of as weaker and thus less qualified to be a police officer due to the previous nurturing role they occupied. Discrimination and sexual harassment in police departments serve as additional sources of stress for female police officers above and beyond the stressors that all police officers face (Brough and Frame 2004). Regardless of occupation, females generally have higher turnover rates than male employees (Brough and Frame 2004). Female's higher turnover rates could be influenced by gender specific factors, such as discrimination, especially in traditionally male dominated jobs, such as policing (Brough and Frame 2004). Research also has shown that people working in gender atypical jobs tend to have more psychological distress than those in gender typical careers (Purvanova and Muros 2010).

Women in male-typical occupations, such as policing, find themselves in difficult positions and often experience role conflict. A female officer has to be careful of the way she performs her job, because she could be criticized for being too feminine or criticized for not being feminine enough (Purvanova and Muros 2010). For instance, a female police officer may try to manage her identity as a police officer by working long hours, which in turn causes spill over into her personal life because she begins to neglect household and childcare duties in order to work. Therefore, it becomes important to examine gender differences in marital conflict among police officers.

Studies about police work have tended to sample mostly male police officers, thus missing the perspective of female police officers (Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005). It is likely that experiences of female police officers differ from male police officers (Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005). Research has shown that women report more work stress and more job burnout, as well as higher levels of depression, than their male counterparts (Martinussen, Richardson, and Burke 2007; Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005). Work-to-family conflict may also be a larger issue for working women, because they are often still expected to take care of childcare and other household duties in addition to their jobs (Janzen, Muhajarine, and Kelly 2007). Indeed, female police officers may experience considerably more role conflict due to expectations calling on them to be simultaneously dedicated to their job and dedicated to their families. For example, a female police officer could experience role conflict in the form of work-to-family conflict if shifts do not allow her to pick her children up from school or cause her to miss an important family event. In other words, gendered expectations may heighten

the possibility for role conflict. In light of the past literature on the gender gap in policing, the fifth and final hypothesis is proposed:

H₅: Gender will impact the relationships between job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict and marital conflict.

Background Factors and Marital Conflict

This thesis takes into account demographic variables that may be relevant to marital conflict, including age, race, education, and the presence of preschool-aged children. This thesis includes age because past literature has indicated that older couples tend to have lower levels of marital conflict (Seider et al. 2009). Research has also shown that young married couples tend to have higher levels of marital conflict than married couples who are in late adulthood (Kulik 2002). Previous literature has indicated that there are racial differences in marital conflict (Faulkner, Davey, and Davey 2005). Hence, race is taken into account in this thesis because research has found that non-whites—African-Americans in particular—generally experience higher levels of marital conflict than whites (Dush and Taylor 2012; Faulkner, Davey, and Davey 2005). Education is also studied because police officers who have higher levels of education tend to experience more job stress, which has been connected to marital conflict (Patterson 2002; Story and Repetti 2006; Voydanoff 2004). Indeed, a study on police stress, coping programs, and spousal relationships, identified that police officers who were more educated tended to experience higher levels of marital conflict (Gul and Delice 2011). This could be because the more education police officers have, the more likely they are to hold higher ranks and thus assume greater responsibility at work. The presence of preschool-aged children in the household is taken into account because of the heightened

stress—time, financial, and so forth—that such parents may experience. As such, research has suggested that having children is related to a heightened level of job burnout, which is in turn related to higher levels of marital conflict (Pines et al. 2011). Literature has also found that the presence of children in the home increases the likelihood of experiencing marital conflict (Faulkner, Davey, and Davey 2005). Younger children in particular may require more attention and time than older children.

Summary

Chapter Two introduced role theory as the theoretical orientation of this thesis. It also reviewed past literature pertaining to the main variables used in this thesis. Hypotheses based on previous literature were also introduced. The next chapter, Chapter Three, will explore the methodology of this thesis. The variables utilized in this study will be explained in depth, as will the questionnaire and analytic strategies used.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the relationships between job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, and marital conflict among police officers. This thesis also serves to explore gender dynamics within the previously mentioned relationships. A secondary data set is used to address the research question and hypotheses of this thesis. This chapter serves to detail the methodology of this thesis. The first part of the chapter will explain the data set that is used. The second part of this chapter will describe the measurement of job stress, job burnout, and work-to-family conflict, marital conflict, and the control variables. The final section of this chapter will describe the analytic strategy used to explore the hypotheses.

Data and Sample

The 1995 Work and Family Services for Law Enforcement Personnel in the United States study was the data set used for this thesis. The questionnaire that was administered sought to provide information on work-family issues from the perspective of police officers (Delprino, O'Quin, Kennedy 1995). This data set was collected in three parts. The first part acted as a pilot study that measured work-family issues and mental/physical health services provided by respective police departments. Based on the pilot study, the researchers created another questionnaire that also focused on work-family issues as well as physical and mental health. The final portion of the data set focused on the departments/agencies that the police officers worked for, with the

questionnaire focused on the services offered by the agencies to help police officers and their families cope with job-related trauma. The data from the “Police Officer Questionnaire,” ($N = 1,632$) is utilized in this thesis to study the relationships between job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, and marital conflict in police officers. This 148-item questionnaire was distributed to over 4,400 police officers in the Northeast, Midwest, and Southwest (Delprino, O’Quin, and Kennedy 1995). The questionnaire was mailed to police departments, where department personnel were instructed to randomly selected police officers to participate (Delprino et al. 1995). The selected police officers mailed the completed questionnaire to researchers at Buffalo State College, using return envelopes provided by the researchers (Delprino et al. 1995). Because the research question involves marital conflict, only police officers that were married are included in this study ($N = 1137$; $N = 95$ females and 1042 males). This questionnaire had a response rate of approximately 36%.

Measures

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable, *marital conflict*, measured the police officer’s perceived amount of marital conflict. The question asked the respondent to report the amount of conflict that existed in his or her marriage. Response categories were organized into five groups: (1) “not at all,” (2) “a little,” (3) “some,” (4) “quite a bit,” and (5) “a lot.”

Independent Variables

The first independent variable *job stress* was measured with one item. Respondents were asked to indicate the level of job stress they experienced. The respondents were presented with five response categories: (1) “not at all,” (2) “a little,”

(3) “some,” (4) “quite a bit,” and (5) “a lot.” *Job burnout* was also a one-item measure in which respondents indicated how much job burnout out they felt as a result of being a police officer. The response categories ranged from (1) “not at all to (5) “a lot.”

Work-to-Family Conflict was measured using a two-item scale. Respondents were asked the degree to which they agreed with the following statements: “conflicts at work carry over to home life” and “I carry feelings from work incidents home.” The response categories for both of these items ranged from (1) “strongly disagree” to (5) “strongly agree.” The items were summed and then divided by 2 for ease of interpretation. This scale has an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.76 for male respondents and 0.74 for female respondents.

Control Variables

The control variables of age, race, gender, education, and the presence of preschool-aged children are also included in this study. *Age* was measured in years. Race was coded into a dummy variable. For *race* “1” represented white respondents and “0” indicated that the respondent belongs to some other racial group. *Gender* was also a dummy variable, with men coded as “1” and women coded as “0.”

To measure *education*, the respondents were asked to indicate the highest level of education they had achieved. Response categories included: high school (1), some college (2), obtained an Associate’s degree (3), obtained a Bachelor’s degree (4), completed some graduate school (5), and obtained a graduate degree (6). The researcher theorizes that this question did not have an option for “less than high school” because, in general, a high school diploma or high school equivalency is a requirement to become a police officer (Burch 2012). *Presence of preschool-aged children* was measured by

asking respondents: “do you have any preschool-aged children?” It was coded as a dummy variable, with “1” indicating that the respondent does have preschool-aged children and “0” indicating that the respondent does not have preschool-aged children.

Analytic Strategy

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the relationship between job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, and marital conflict among police officers. Another purpose of this thesis is to examine the potential role of work-to-family conflict as a mediating variable between job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict among police officers. A last purpose is to explore gender differences in the experience of job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, and marital conflict among police officers. This thesis uses univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analyses. Descriptive statistics will be presented to provide a more in-depth look at the variables and bivariate correlations will be conducted to determine how the variables are related to each other. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression will be conducted to explore the hypotheses. Two models will be used. Model 1 will present the direct relationships between job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict among male and female police officers. Model 1 is used to test Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 5.

Model 2 will address Hypothesis 4 by exploring the relationship between job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict among police officers using work-to-family conflict as a mediating variable. This model will be the same as Model 1, except work-to-family conflict will be added. A mediating variable helps explain the relationship between independent and dependent variables, or in this case, job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict (Baron and Kenny 1986). In this thesis, it is proposed that work-to-

family conflict may mediate the relationships between job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict. It is suggested that job stress and job burnout may impact marital conflict largely by increasing work-to-family conflict. In order for a variable to be considered a mediating variable, Baron and Kenny (1986) outlined four requirements that must be achieved. First, there must be a significant relationship between job burnout, job stress, and marital conflict. Second the independent variables, job stress and job burnout, must have a significant relationship with the mediating variable, work-to-family conflict. This requirement will be tested by running an additional OLS regression, using work-to-family conflict as the dependent variable. The third requirement dictates that the mediating variable—work-to-family conflict—must have a significant relationship with the dependent variable, marital conflict. Finally, there must be either a decline in significance or absence of significance between job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict when work-to-family conflict is being controlled for. Baron and Kenny (1986) posit that as long as the requirements are met, then the mediation hypothesis is supported. To address the research question about gender differences, analyses are performed separately by gender ($N = 95$ females and 1042 males). This allows the researcher to see if gender impacts the relationships between job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, and marital conflict among police officers, thereby addressing the fifth hypothesis.

Summary

This chapter gave an overview of the methodology utilized in this thesis, including a description of the data set used. It detailed the dependent, independent, and control variables that are used and explained the analytic strategy. Chapter Four will provide the results of the OLS regression.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The overall goal of this thesis is to explore relationships between job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, and marital conflict among police officers. Data from the 1995 Work and Family Services for Law Enforcement Personnel in the United States study ($N = 1137$) were used to address three research questions. First, do the job stress and job burnout experienced by police officers impact marital conflict? Second, does work-to-family conflict mediate the relationship between job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict? Third, do these relationships vary by gender? This chapter will outline the descriptive statistics and present the results of the bivariate correlations, and discuss the results of the OLS regressions for both direct and mediating relationships.

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics for the variables for both males and females are presented in Table 1. In terms of the background variables, 40% of both male and female police officers reported that they had preschool-aged children and on average both male and female police officers indicated they had obtained an Associate's degree ($SD = 1.22$ and 1.27 , respectively). About 76% of the female police officers indicated that they were white and the average age was about 35 ($SD = 5.96$). In comparison, about 88% of the male police officers indicated that they were white and the average age was 38 ($SD = 8.27$).

In terms of the key study variables, both female and male police officers reported “some” job stress with means of 3.19 ($SD = 1.14$) and 3.12 ($SD = 1.05$) respectively. In terms of job burnout, male police officers had a mean of 2.84 ($SD = 1.26$) and female police officers had a mean of 2.66 ($SD = 1.27$), which indicates that both male and female police officers reported “some” job burnout. The mean level of work-to-family conflict was 3.17 ($SD = 1.14$) for female police officers and 2.98 ($SD = 1.13$) for male police officers, which indicates both male and female police officers neither agree nor disagree that they experienced work-to-family conflict. A two-tailed t test, however, revealed that there is a significant difference between the means for male and female police officers, with female police officers reporting more work-to-family conflict. Finally, marital conflict had a mean of 2.20 ($SD = 1.06$) for female police officers and 2.28 ($SD = 1.17$) for male police officers, which indicates that both male and female police officers reported that they experience “a little” marital conflict.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics (N = 95 female police officers and N = 1042 male police officers)*

Variables	Female Police Officers			Male Police Officers		
	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range
Age	34.89	5.97	--	38.81	8.28	--
Race ^a	.77	--	--	.89	--	--
Education	3.27	1.28	1 – 6	3.06	1.23	1 – 6
Preschool-aged Children ^b	.40	--	--	.40	--	--
Job Stress	3.19	1.14	1 – 5	3.12	1.06	1 – 5
Job Burnout	2.66	1.28	1 – 5	2.84	1.27	1 – 5
Work-to-Family Conflict	3.17*	1.14	1 – 5	2.98*	1.13	1 – 5
Marital Conflict	2.20	1.07	1 – 5	2.28	1.17	1 – 5

^a Race was measured as a dummy variable with white respondents coded as 1 and all other races coded as 0. ^b Preschool-aged children in the home was a dummy variable where 1 indicates that the respondent does have preschool-aged children and 0 indicates that the respondent does not have preschool-aged children. * Two-tailed t tests were performed for job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, and marital conflict and a * denotes those that were significant at the .05 level or higher.

Bivariate Analyses

Bivariate correlations conducted separately by gender were done to see how the variables relate to each other. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2. The results for female police officers will be discussed first. Race and education had a weak to moderate correlation and were the only control variables that were related to each other for female police officers ($r = .296, p < .01$). Race was also found to have a weak to moderate correlation with work-to-family conflict ($r = .204, p < .05$). For female police officers job stress was found to be moderately strong to strongly and positively correlated to the following variables: job burnout ($r = .725, p < .001$), work-to-family conflict ($r = .591, p < .001$), and marital conflict ($r = .462, p < .001$). Results revealed that job burnout had a moderately strong and positive correlation with work-to-family conflict ($r = .491, p < .001$) as well as marital conflict ($r = .410, p < .001$). Work-to-family conflict also had weak to moderate and positive correlation with marital conflict ($r = .323, p < .001$).

Male police officers also had a number of variables that were correlated with each other, as shown in Table 2. Starting with the control variables that were correlated with other control variables, the results revealed that age was weakly and positively correlated with education ($r = .069, p < .05$) and was weak to moderately and negatively correlated with presence of preschool-aged children ($r = -.398, p < .001$). The results also revealed that a number of control variables were correlated with the independent and dependent variables. For male police officers, age was found to have a weak and positive correlation with work-to-family conflict ($r = .084, p < .01$). Race was found to be weakly and positively correlation with the following variables: job stress ($r = .075, p < .05$), job

burnout ($r = .061, p < .05$), and work-to-family conflict ($r = .118, p < .001$), which means that white police officers tend to have higher levels job stress, job burnout, and work-to-family conflict than non-white police officers. Education was also found to have a weak and positive correlation with work-to-family conflict ($r = .114, p < .001$) for male police officers. The findings showed the presence of preschool-aged children was negatively and weakly correlated with job burnout ($r = -.075, p < .05$) as well as work-to-family conflict ($r = -.065, p < .05$).

Moving on to correlations between independent and dependent variables, job stress had a moderately strong to strong correlations with the following variables: job burnout ($r = .676, p < .001$), work-to-family conflict ($r = .492, p < .001$), and marital conflict ($r = .401, p < .001$). The results revealed that job burnout was positively and moderately correlated with work-to-family conflict ($r = .374, p < .001$) as well as marital conflict ($r = .334, p < .001$). Finally, work-to-family conflict was found to be moderately and positively correlated with the marital conflict ($r = .316, p < .001$) of male police officers.

Table 2. *Bivariate Correlations for Male and Female Police Officers*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age	--	.132	.161	-.091	-.024	-.004	.024	.073
2. Race	.053	--	.296**	-.140	.129	.148	.204*	.081
3. Education	.069	.053	--	-.093	-.094	.035	.126	-.042
4. Preschool-aged Children	-.398***	-.030	-.033	--	.042	.012	-.009	-.002
5. Job Stress	.027	.075*	.038	-.044	--	.725***	.591***	.462***
6. Job Burnout	.055	.061*	.043	-.075*	.676***	--	.491***	.410***
7. Work-to-Family Conflict	.084**	.118***	.114***	-.065*	.492***	.374***	--	.323***
8. Marital Conflict	.003	-.005	.022	-.048	.401***	.334***	--	--

Note: Female police officer coefficients are reported above the diagonal and male police officer coefficients are reported below the diagonal, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed test)

Regression Results

Model 1: Direct Relationships

OLS regression was used to assess both the direct and mediating relationships between job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, and marital conflict. The results are presented in Table 3 for females and Table 4 for males. Model 1 explored the direct relationships that may exist between job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, and marital conflict, while also incorporating the control variables of education, age, race, and presence of preschool-aged children. Before delving into the results of the study in relation to the proposed hypotheses, it is important to note that none of the control variables had a statistically significant relationship with marital conflict for both male and female police officers.

The first hypothesis posited that job burnout would be positively associated with marital conflict among police officers. This hypothesis was not supported for female police officers and it was supported for male police officers ($\beta = .108, p < .01$). Hypothesis 2 proposed that job stress would be positively associated with marital conflict among police officers. This hypothesis was supported for both male police officers ($\beta = .326, p < .001$) and female police officers ($\beta = .322, p < .05$). Results revealed that Hypothesis 3, which stated that work-to-family conflict would be positively associated with marital conflict among police officers, was supported only for male police officers ($\beta = .154, p < .001$).

Table 3. *OLS Regression for the Effects of Job Stress, Job Burnout, and Work-to-Family Conflict on the Marital Conflict of Female Police Officers (N = 95)*

Variables	Model 1		Model 2			β
	B	S EB	B	B	S EB	
Age	.013	.017	.077	.013	.017	.077
Race	.029	.252	.011	.016	.255	.006
Education	-.025	.085	-.029	-.035	.088	-.042
Preschool-aged Children	-.064	.207	-.030	-.063	.208	-.029
Job Stress	.301*	.132	.322	.267 [†]	.146	.285
Job Burnout	.141	.118	.167	.137	.119	.161
Work-to-Family Conflict	--	--	--	.062	.113	.068
R ²	.219	--	--	.222	--	--
Change in R ²	--	--	--	.003	--	--
F for Model	4.11**	--	--	3.54**	--	--
F for Change in R ²	--	--	--	.306	--	--

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, [†] $p < .10$ (two-tailed test)

Table 4. *OLS Regression for the Effects of Job Stress, Job Burnout, and Work-to-Family Conflict on the Marital Conflict of Male Police Officers (N = 1042)*

Variables	Model 1		Model 2			β
	B	S EB	B	B	S EB	
Age	-.004	.004	-.027	-.005	.004	-.035
Race	-.165	.107	-.044	-.203 [†]	.106	-.054
Education	.008	.027	.008	-.004	.027	-.004
Preschool-aged Children	-.096	.074	-.040	-.090	.073	-.038
Job Stress	.361***	.043	.326	.286***	.045	.259
Job Burnout	.099**	.036	.108	.090*	.035	.098
Work-to-Family Conflict	--	--	--	.159***	.034	.154
R ²	.168	--	--	.186	--	--
Change in R ²	--	--	--	.018	--	--
F for Model	34.92***	--	--	33.74***	--	--
F for Change in R ²	--	--	--	22.35	--	--

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, [†] $p < .10$ (two-tailed test)

Model 2: Mediation Model

Model 2 tests the fourth hypothesis that posited work-to-family conflict would mediate the relationships between job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict among police officers. As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, Baron and Kenny (1986) outlined four requirements that must be met in order to establish mediation. First, there must be a significant relationship between the independent variables—job burnout and job stress—

and the dependent variable, marital conflict. For both male and female police officers, a positive and significant relationship was found between job stress and marital conflict ($\beta = .326, p < .001$ and $\beta = .322, p < .05$, respectively). A positive and significant relationship for job burnout and marital conflict was also found for only male police officers ($\beta = .108, p < .01$). Because there was no significant relationship between job burnout and marital conflict for female police officers, the first requirement is not fulfilled and thus work-to-family conflict cannot be a mediating variable for job burnout and marital conflict among female police officers in this analysis.

The second requirement states that the independent variables—job stress and job burnout—have significant relationships with the mediating variable, work-to-family conflict. In order to test this requirement, work-to-family conflict was regressed onto job stress and job burnout, along with the control variables. The results of this regression are found in Table 5. For female police officers, job stress and work-to-family conflict were shown to have a positive and significant relationship ($\beta = .546, p < .001$), thus fulfilling the second requirement of mediation. Job burnout and work-to-family conflict were not shown to have a significant relationship ($\beta = .080, n.s.$). As shown in Table 3, the first requirement for mediation for job burnout for female police officers was already found to be unfulfilled, as was the second requirement, which means that work-to-family conflict does not mediate the relationship between job burnout and marital conflict for female police officers. For male police officer job stress and work-to-family conflict had a positive and significant relationship ($\beta = .437, p < .001$) and thus the second requirement of mediation was met. However, there was no significant relationship found between job burnout and work-to-family conflict for male police officers, as shown in Table 5, thus

work-to-family conflict does not appear to act as a mediating variable between job burnout and marital conflict.

Table 5. *OLS Regression for the Effects of Job Stress and Job Burnout on Work-to-Family Conflict among Police Officers (N = 1165)*

Variable	Female Police Officers		Male Police Officers			β
	B	SEB	B	B	SEB	
Age	.000	.016	.001	.008 [†]	.004	.055
Race	.208	.239	.076	.239*	.098	.066
Education	.116*	.081	.182	.073**	.025	.079
Preschool-aged Children	-.026	.196	-.011	-.038	.068	-.017
Job Stress	.553***	.125	.546	.469***	.039	.437
Job Burnout	.074	.112	.080	.058 [†]	.033	.065
R ²	.400	--	--	.260	--	--

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; [†] $p < .10$ (two-tailed test)

The third requirement for establishing mediation is that the mediating variable must have a significant relationship with the dependent variable. As shown in Model 2 of Table 3, this requirement is not fulfilled for female police officers, as work-to-family conflict does not have a significant relationship with marital conflict ($\beta = .068$, *n.s.*). With the third requirement failing to be fulfilled, work-to-family conflict does not appear to mediate the relationships between job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict for female police officers. For male police officers, the third requirement for mediation is fulfilled because, as shown in Model 2 of Table 4, there is a significant relationship between work-to-family conflict and marital conflict ($\beta = .154$, $p < .001$). The final requirement dictates that there must be a decline or absence of significance between the independent variables (job stress and job burnout) and dependent variable (marital conflict) when the mediating variable (work-to-family conflict) is introduced. As presented in Table 4, there is a slight decline in the significance of the relationship for job burnout for male police officers ($p = .005$ to $p = .011$) when work-to-family conflict is

introduced. Because of the decline in significance of the relationship job burnout, the fourth requirement is met; however, because the decline is minor it is unlikely that work-to-family conflict plays a large role as a mediating variable. In regards to the significance of job stress, there is no change in the significance of the relationship ($p = .000$ to $p = .000$), which means that the fourth requirement is not met for job stress. Altogether, the results show that for male police officers work-to-family conflict partially mediates the relationship between job burnout and marital conflict, but job stress does not seem to be mediated by work-to-family conflict.

The fifth hypothesis that stated that gender would impact the relationships between job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, and marital conflict was partially supported. Results revealed that male and female police officers differed in terms of the relationships between job burnout, work-to-family conflict, and marital conflict where only male police officers having significant relationships between job burnout ($\beta = .108, p < .01$), work-to-family conflict ($\beta = .154, p < .001$), and marital conflict.

Summary and Overview

This chapter detailed the analyses of both direct and mediating relationships between job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, and marital conflict. For female police officers, a positive and significant relationship was found between job stress and marital conflict. Further, there was no evidence found to support a mediating model for female police officers. Positive and significant relationships were found between job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, and marital conflict for male police officers. Although the mediating model was somewhat supported for male police officers, the

evidence suggests that work-to-family conflict was not a major mediator for the variables. Differences between the male and female experience of key variables were evident, as all of the primary independent variables had direct relationships with the marital conflict of male police officers, but only job stress had a direct relationship for female police officers. Chapter Five will provide additional discussion of the results, as well as connect the results back to role theory and the previous literature. The next chapter will also discuss the implications of the results and the limitations of the thesis. Additionally, ideas for future research will be proposed.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The overall purpose of this thesis is to explore the relationships between job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, and marital conflict of police officers. The 1995 Work and Family Services for Law Enforcement Personnel in the United States study was used to examine the following three research questions: 1) do job stress, job burnout, and work-to-family conflict impact marital conflict among police officers?, 2) does work-to-family conflict mediate the relationship between job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict?, and 3) do female and male police officers have different experiences in terms of how job stress, job burnout, and work-to-family conflict impact marital conflict? This chapter will review and discuss the findings of this thesis. The results will also be tied back to the theoretical orientation and previous literature that guided this thesis. Implications of the findings and the limitations will then be discussed. Finally, future avenues for research will be proposed and a brief conclusion that summarizes the results of this thesis will be given.

Discussion of Results

Direct Relationships

Before delving into the results regarding the key variables in this study, it is important to discuss the results concerning the control variables. The results suggested that none of the control variables were significant in predicting the marital conflict of male or female police officers. This is a surprising finding considering the literature

about these variables. Indeed, the researcher was expecting to find that age would be negatively associated with marital conflict because previous literature indicated that younger couples tend to experience more marital conflict, whereas older couples tend to experience less marital conflict (Kulik 2002; Seider et al. 2009). Given previous literature, it was also expected that non-white police officers would report more the marital conflict because in general non-whites tend to have higher levels of marital conflict than whites (Dush and Taylor 2012; Faulkner, Davey, and Davey 2005). Given the research that indicated having children, especially young children, can increase marital conflict, it was also surprising to find that the presence of preschool-aged children was not related to marital conflict among male and female police officers (Faulkner, Davey, and Davey 2005; Pines et al. 2011). It is possible that this thesis did not show these same patterns because the unique stresses of police work require that police officers learn different coping methods that may mitigate the usual predictors of marital conflict. In terms of age, it is possible that older police officers and their spouses have become accustomed to the policing lifestyle. Lastly, because police officers do work such long hours, perhaps when they do go home they cherish the time they have with their young children.

Job stress had a positive relationship with the marital conflict of both male and female police officers. Research has found job stress contributes to marital conflict in general, and can be toxic to police marriages specifically (Buck and Neff 2012; Matthews, Conger, and Wickrama 1996; Roberts and Levenson 2001). This may be because policing is an inherently stressful occupation that is comprised of characteristics that can negatively impact its workers, including their marital relationships (Burke 1994;

Howard, Donofrio, and Boles 2004; Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005; Wu 2009). When such stress occurs it can cause tension between spouses and make it difficult for spouses to be engaged in actively resolving marital issues that in turn could lead to even greater marital conflict (Buck and Neff 2012).

A surprising result was that job burnout was significant for male police officers, but not for female police officers. It was anticipated that job burnout would be significant to the marital conflict among police officers regardless of gender because job burnout has been shown to be prevalent among police officers, and is also linked to marital conflict (Burke 1994; Hawkins 2001; Maslach and Jackson 1981; Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005). Further, research has speculated that females in general tend to experience more job burnout than males, and with the additional stressors experienced by female police officers—such as sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace—it was anticipated that the job burnout of female police officers would be significantly related to marital conflict (Brough and Frame 2004; Purvanova and Muros 2010). Indeed, a female police officer may have to manage her femininity when at work, while juggling traditional gender roles in the home, which could be burdensome. It is possible that burnout was not significant to the marital conflict female police officers because the stresses of policing may impact females through other negative physical or psychological health outcomes. Indeed, female police officers may be experiencing job burnout, but instead of impacting their marital conflict, it may impact them through the experience of depression or other forms of psychological distress. It is also important to note that on average male police officers in this study were about four years older than female police officers, possibly making the effects of job burnout more observable for male police

officers. Another possibility is that because police work is a male-dominated profession, female police officers might be reluctant to admit they experience job burnout because this may lead to them being seen as weak.

Work-to-family conflict was expected to have a positive relationship with police officers' marital conflict regardless of gender because the past literature has shown that key characteristics associated with police work, such as no control over case load, long hours, and the possibility of being denied leave, make it difficult for police officers to balance work and family (Burke 1994; Howard, Donofrio, and Boles 2004; Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005; Wu 2009). The results revealed that work-to-family conflict had a significant relationship with marital conflict for male police officers, but not for female police officers. In regards to role theory, this finding is especially surprising because it would be expected that an occupation characterized by high stress and long work hours would lead work-to-family conflict increasing marital conflict among both male and females. Indeed, females are traditionally responsible for household maintenance and childcare regardless of employment status (Janzen, Muhajarine, and Kelly 2007; Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005). In terms of role theory, it is possible that work-to-family conflict was not significantly related to the marital conflict of female police officers because females may be more accustomed to juggling multiple tasks or roles. In contrast, male police officers may not be able deal with the competing domains of work and family. This thesis contributes to the larger literature on work-to-family conflict by noting that gender, occupation, and other contextual factors can alter how work-to-family conflict relates to marital outcomes.

Mediating Relationships

The final hypothesis that posited that work-to-family conflict would mediate the relationships between job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict of police officers was deemed largely unsupported. This was due to the four requirements of mediation being minimally met or not met at all. The results indicated that work-to-family conflict did not mediate the relationships between job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict among female police officers. This result is not surprising given that work-to-family conflict and job burnout did not have significant direct relationships to the marital conflict of female police officers. In terms of male police officers, it did not appear that work-to-family conflict mediated the relationship between job stress and marital conflict. It is possible, albeit unlikely, that work-to-family conflict mediates the relationship between job burnout and marital conflict for male police officers. As stated earlier, men may not be able to juggle multiple roles and thus their stress might contribute to more work-to-family conflict and marital conflict simultaneously. The lack of mediation was a surprising finding because past literature indicated that job stress and job burnout contribute to higher levels of work-to-family conflict, and work-to-family conflict contributes to marital conflict (Cowlshaw, Evans, and McLennan 2010; Howard, Donofrio, and Boles 2004; Stewart 2013; Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005). Instead, this thesis suggests that the relationships between job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, and marital conflict are direct in nature among police officers.

Implications

An important finding and contribution of this thesis is that contrary to previous literature, female police officers did not experience job burnout and work-to-family

conflict in a way that impacts marital conflict. Male police officers, however, did have significant relationships between work-to-family conflict, job burnout, job stress, and marital conflict. As such, one implication of this thesis is that working females' marital conflict may not be as vulnerable to work-to-family conflict as previously thought, at least in male-dominated occupations. Other social implications emerge from the need for programming to address job stressors.

Because the public safety is reliant on the police officers' ability to adequately perform their professional duties, it is appropriate for police departments and other law enforcement agencies to provide adequate services for dealing with work and family issues for both male and female employees, especially in terms of how to deal with stress. It may be especially important that male police officers attend programs that provide information on how to effectively cope and solve issues related to burnout and work-to-family conflict. Police officers should also have access to crisis intervention programs that help them learn how to deal with and prevent spousal conflict.

A theoretical implication of this study is that males may have more trouble with role conflict than females, especially when working in male-dominated environments. There are relationships between job stress and marital conflict for both male and female police officers, however, the results revealed that there is a relationship between work-to-family conflict and marital conflict for male police officers only. The image of what it means to be a successful police officer often shows total dedication to the job (Howard, Donofrio, and Boles 2004) and often comes with feelings of heightened masculinity that may not be conducive to male police officers juggling work and family life. Role theory may not be beneficial for female police officers because policing is a male-dominated

occupation. As such, females may compartmentalize their family needs, so as to not appear weak. It is also possible that females do not experience as much role conflict as males because females are better accustomed to having to juggle multiple roles. It may be the case that a standpoint theory might more accurately capture the issues of female police officers. This is because standpoint theory may highlight the unique experience of females working in male-dominated occupations better than a more generalized theory.

Limitations

There are a few limitations of this thesis that should be mentioned. First, this study had a small number of cases for female police officers. There may not have been enough female cases for relationships that exist in the population to be uncovered, and thus there is a risk that a Type II error was committed. A Type II error occurs when the researcher fails to reject a null hypothesis that should be rejected. However, it is important to note that job burnout and work-to-family conflict were not approaching significance for females. Another limitation lies in the method of data collection. The methodology of the original data collection indicated that the surveys were sent to police departments and then department personnel were instructed to randomly select police officers. This is a limitation because it is possible that the police officers were not randomly selected, which may interfere with the generalizeability of results. The third limitation also lies in the methodology. Only access to the codebook that accompanied the data set was given, not the questionnaire. This is a problem because the codebook does not dictate the actual phrasing of the questions, which would allow for more clarity in this study. Another limitation of this thesis is the use of one-item, self-report measures for the variables of job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict. This is a limitation

because one-item measures may not be able to fully capture variables as nuanced and complex as job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict. A fifth limitation of this thesis is that because of the use of cross-sectional data, it is difficult to determine the direction of causality. This means, using job burnout and marital conflict among male police officers as an example, that the data reveals that a relationship between the two variables exists but does not distinguish whether job burnout is leading to marital conflict or whether marital conflict is leading to job burnout. The sixth and final limitation of this thesis is that the data set was compiled in 1995 and is thus slightly dated. However, it is important to note that using a data set from this point in time may be beneficial to this thesis because of the high crime rates evident during that time frame. In 1995 there were about a million and a half more offenses committed compared to 2001, which means that the job stressors inherent to policing may have been especially high at the time (United States Department of Justice 1995; United States Department of Justice 2012).

Direction for Future Research

This thesis explored the relationships between job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, and marital conflict among police officers. The results of this thesis showed that job stress had a positive relationship with the marital conflict of both male and female police officers. However, job burnout and work-to-family conflict were only related to the marital conflict of male police officers. For this reason, it may be beneficial to research issues that females in policing face in greater detail. It would also be beneficial to collect newer data that addresses current issues in police work. Although the inherent stressful nature of policing is likely to remain fairly stable, there may be additional stressors that police officers face as technology advances. It would be

interesting to research the issues of job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, and marital conflict among professionals in similar occupations to police officers, such as federal law enforcement and military personnel. Although quantitative data is useful for making generalizations, it would also be helpful to approach the marital conflict among police officers qualitatively. In-depth interviews would allow researchers to explore many facets of job stress, job burnout, work-to-family conflict, as well as the specific aspects of policing that contribute to the experience of those issues, such as gender discrimination.

Conclusion

This thesis examined the impacts of job stress, job burnout, and work-to-family conflict on the marital conflict among police officers. Because of the stresses inherent to policing and how police officers choose to cope with key stressful characteristics of their occupation has the ability to impact public safety, it is important to study these relationships. This thesis reinforces the existing of literature on police work by finding that job stress, job burnout, and work-to-family conflict impacted the marital conflict of male police officers. This thesis also contributes to literature because the results did not support the hypotheses that proposed that job burnout and work-to-family conflict would impact marital conflict among female police officers. This is a contribution because the larger literature generally agrees that females tend to be especially vulnerable to job burnout and work-to-family conflict, but this thesis suggests that even when job burnout and work-to-family conflict are high, they might not lead to marital conflict among female police officers (Janzen, Muhajarine, and Kelly 2007; Purvanova and Muros 2010; Thompson, Kirk, and Brown 2005). Overall, the results of this thesis have social

implications for the consequences of work-to-family conflict, job stress, job burnout, and marital conflict in specific contexts.

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