

**IMPACT OF THE COMPLETED SOUTH CAROLINA POST CRITICAL INCIDENT
SEMINAR ON THE WELL-BEING OF THE LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTICIPANTS**

by

Michael P. Evans

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to discover the impact of the completed South Carolina Post Critical Incident Seminar (SC PCIS) on the participants' well-being, and the impact on the peer team members. Critical stress events or traumatic loss of life did have a significant impact on the law enforcement officer and those that were associated with that officer. The theory that guides this was study was the general strain theory; it allowed for the relationship between the duration, severity, and certainty of the stressors that had a negative influence on the well-being of those that attend the SC PCIS process. Research showed that unaddressed stressors lead to rapid and drastic effects on the psychological and physiological aspects of the law enforcement officer. These stressors could quickly and rapidly overwhelm traditional coping skills leading to a decline in overall well-being and quality of life. The ability to identify a program that addresses the efforts to improve well-being and create long-lasting benefits was vital for all parties that interact with the law enforcement officer. The qualitative study did involve semi-structured interviews with peer team members that interacted with all participants on multiple occasions at the SC PCIS seminar. The grounded theory was used in the data analysis strategies. The completed study showed that there was a positive impact on the well-being of the participants that completed the program. The impact of the SC PCIS on the peer team members was positive as well.

Keywords: Post Critical Incident Seminar, Critical Stress, Well-Being, Grounded Theory

Dedication

The journey to completing this dissertation would not have been possible without guidance from God who provided me with strength and courage. His light shined the path before my feet and I would not have been able to succeed without Him. To my wife, Brandi, who sacrificed alongside me for the process and encouraged me when I doubted myself and my abilities. To all my family that missed my company during family events and holidays, your love and support were priceless. Finally, to my nephew, Dominic Smith, thank you for your courage as you battled your cancer that showed me that all things were possible while you had hope and the Lord #DomStrong.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Background

Entering into any profession would have its known and unknowns, which could be mitigated by obtaining some understanding of the field so that expectations could be fostered. The gathering of the information could be obtained through reading information, information from those that have experienced it, or by academic methods; however, the preparation would not always set the stage for the training that would be experienced. It was from the initial training that an understanding of the violence would be experienced within the profession, and if agencies were preemptive to the fact that stressors were present, the law enforcement officer would be provided with some form of identification and coping skills. In the presence of traumatic events, especially those that result in the loss of life, it was probable that typical coping skills may become overwhelmed, further exposing the officer to the strain of stress. The day-to-day operational requirements of the profession place officers in a position of increased frequency, duration, and severity of stressors that could have numerous adverse effects for the officer's life (Chitra & Karunanidhi, 2018; Fleischmann et al., 2018). The stressors from the violence and traumatic events could have a predictable response mechanism, yet there remained the probability that other interventions would be required to improve the well-being of the officer. The prediction of stressors and the variety of responses could lead to unresolved or unaddressed stressors infiltrating the work and private lives of the officers, which led to further stress.

Regardless of the traumatic event, there could be a trigger creating un-coping stress from the first exposure to a point requiring increased frequency to create chronic stress issues. Because each human being was unique, the person's ability to cope with stressors could be

attributed to life experiences, experience within law enforcement, age, and numerous varying factors. However, no matter the person, there would be a point in time when the duration, frequency, and severity of stressors would overload the coping skills leading to acute stress, burnout, compassion fatigue, substance abuse, and other mental health problems that would influence the officer's quality of life (Doyle et al., 2021). The compounding adverse effects of stress could influence all aspects of the officer's life, leading to a spillover event that only complicates the traditional coping skills that may be present. Disruptions to the personal life of the officer could lead to additional on-duty stress because there was no point in escaping from stressors. The process could lead to placing the officers and others that the officer interacts with in danger of unintended consequences. The information on stress was well studied, so understanding interventions that go beyond the traditional coping skills needs to be conducted. The ability to intervene in a crisis or soon after a critical stress event could improve the quality of life of the officer and prolong the officer's career. The South Carolina Law Enforcement Officers' Assistance Program (SCLEAP) was a pioneer and serves as a foundational group that deploys the Post Critical Incident Seminar (PCIS) that goes beyond traditional intervention methods to create a holistic approach (South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program, n.d.).

Problem Statement

The ability of episodic stress to overwhelm the understanding of the event and aspects to cope with the event could lead to increased stress levels that were compounded when the event was one of traumatic violence or loss of life. The loss of a fellow law enforcement officer, becoming involved in an event involving loss of life, acts of violence, or an officer-involved shooting requires some form of debriefing that could provide for long-term recovery (Tsai et al.,

2017). Stress could create tragic consequences such as depression, anxiety, alcohol or drug usage, and health issues unrecoverable events within the officer's life that could occur from one exposure, day-to-day exposure, and multiple exposures that do not allow for the stress levels to be alleviated, so sign and symptoms become compounded, creating conflicting information for the agency, supervisors, peers, and family to recognize (Cohen et al., 2019). It became apparent that critical debriefing events that were required or voluntarily could have an influence on the ability to cope with the stress of a traumatic event and allowed for the officer to avoid the need to suppress the signs and effects of stress so that that well-being could be improved. The term traumatic event could be used for a multitude of events that did have an adverse effect on officers, such as pursuits, high-risk traffic stops, severe traffic collision, or other events that would elevate the officer's response to the stressor that was unhealthy (Burke, 2018; Civilotti et al., 2021; Cohen et al., 2019).

While there were numerous professions that could lead to high levels of exposure to stress, law enforcement was one that was unpredictable, and the probability of exposure to severe traumatic events could create a cascading effect that would overload the ability to properly address the stress. The unpredictability rests in the fact that any call for service or a quick trip into a gas station could lead to an event resulting in violence or the loss of life. The adverse effects could spillover into a variety of aspects of the officer's life, leading to numerous conflicts that only lead to further stress (Lambert et al., 2017; Qureshi et al., 2019). The inability to intervene or refrain from allowing the stressors to enter the officer's life could further complicate the efforts to cope with or deploy intervening techniques because the stressors may have reached an unrecoverable level that requires additional resources that may not traditionally be available. The infiltration into the family or personal life of the officer prevents the separation of work and

home stress which further complicates matters because the family members may not be able to address their stress as well (Landers et al., 2019). Intervention could provide some relief to stressors, but an intervention that could encompass multiple aspects of the affected officer's life may be more effective in influencing well-being.

The variety of stressors within the law enforcement profession could progress from organizational stress, occupational stress, and environmental stress, which contain the bulk of the stressors that were typically associated with law enforcement would be expanded upon within the literature review. Yet, the outcomes of the stressors could compound the adverse effects when it was accompanied with a traumatic or critical stress event. The stressors could lead to incidents of domestic violence, interpersonal partner violence, child abuse, divorce, alcohol or drug use, and severe health issue that inhibit the ability to be a productive member of society (Jetelina et al., 2020; Turgoose et al., 2017). Traumatic and critical stress events could accelerate the adverse effects of stress to the point that the stressors take control of all coping mechanisms rendering those coping skills ineffective. Without proper interventions, the stressors would continue to amount to an assault on the well-being of the officer, further cascading the feeling of hopelessness that could lead to further trauma that may not be recoverable (Leigh Wolds & Schuldberg, 2016). Tuttle et al. (2018) presented that the spillover effects of stress could have a negative influence on the lives of the officers and those within proximity. The risk associated with stress and the negative aspects continue to be a focus of research so to understand further not only what adverse effects were but also the areas that could allow for effective coping.

It was based on the totality of the research that was performed in preparation for the dissertation process that it became apparent that there was a gap within the research on long-term intervention methods that could address the aftermath of unaddressed or inadequately addressed

stress. Regardless of the stressor, the ability to provide the ability to confront the stress was not just the responsibility of the officer but the agency that the officer was employed. The well-being of the officer must be paramount in the attitude of the leadership, especially in times of low recruitment and retention of the law enforcement profession. The South Carolina Post Critical Incident Seminar (PCIS) process was started with a federal grant in 1997 that followed the Federal Bureau of Investigations Peer Support Techniques, and now South Carolina Post Critical Incident Seminar the SC PCIS serves as a model for 11 other state programs. The South Carolina PCIS was one of the first in the nation to address the dynamic issue of critical stress events' influence in a negative manner on an officer. South Carolina's PCIS developed a positive reputation of assisting officers and others in dealing with the aftermath of these events that other states took notice. While there may be slight variations of the program within others states as the states adopted the program, the core functions remained consistent. Over the course of three days, the participants and any associated family member or partner receive peer team support, evaluations by mental health professionals, and the deployment of eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) (South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program, n.d.). While there were measuring devices that were provided to evaluate the participants before and after the seminars, there was no data collected that examines the impact of the participants' well-being from the interpretation of the peer team members. The most recent study examined the experiences and impact of the PCIS process in Finland (Sumanen, 2020), but nothing that was within the United States or of qualitative nature examines the well-being of the participants once the process was completed.

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between the completed PCIS process and the well-being of the participants within the scope of the grounded theory by performing a qualitative study of the peer team members. The exposure of participants to traumatic and critical stress events have become a daily occurrence which supports the fact that the duration, frequency, and severity of the stress events could have long-lasting adverse effects mentally and physically. The increased stressors could overload coping skills that may have been acquired from training or personal experiences, and the need to have a program to address the variety of responses was paramount (Stancel et al., 2019; Tuttle et al., 2018). The ability to improve the well-being of the officer allowed for the correlation between work and personal life to remain stable while allowing for the officer to continue to work within the profession. Fleischmann et al. (2018) discussed that the perception of the officers of a traumatic event could create an environment of unwillingness to express or disclose the negative effects for fear of losing employment or being stereotyped as weak. The perception of seeking mental health assistance was beginning to see reduced apprehensions; however, the negative effects of the stress could remain if not properly and adequately addressed. Within the PCIS process, the peer team members serve as examples that overcoming similar challenges was possible.

The dramatic effects of acute and chronic stress of law enforcement have been shown to have dire consequences on the response skills of the officers that were unable to relieve the stress regardless of whether the officer was just beginning their career or were longtime professionals. The resiliency of programs that provide further intervention show promise and requires further evaluation (Ramey et al., 2017). Positive intervention within job stress has shown to be a proactive method of reducing stress-related issue and reasons for officers to leave the profession, furthering the stress on those that remain. The importance of improving the well-being of an

officer after a traumatic or critical event allowed for the return to being a productive officer for the community and agency which could improve morale, further reducing stress. Since there were such a variety of reasons that a mental health crisis could occur from the varying stressors in the profession, a program that could allow for an overall assessment of the issue could reduce the most serious outcomes such as suicide, domestic violence, and substances abuse (Kim et al., 2018; Price, 2017; Wild et al., 2020). The self-treatments do not have the foundational success in improving well-being because the person does not have the acquired skills or tools to properly evaluate and develop a course of intervention. Therefore, the SC PCIS process provides a promising outcome, and its foundational success has been modeled by other states.

Significances of the Study

While some stressors and threats were known to be present within the law enforcement profession, there were unpredictable threats that officers must navigate within their daily duties regardless of position. While it was known that the law enforcement profession was one that contains unpredictable threats to not only others but also those that operate within the realm of the profession. The information could be shared, and officers were provided with coping skills or methods to identify that a stress event has a negative influence, but the trauma of critical stress events could easily overwhelm even the most experienced law enforcement officer. The results of this study would provide the profession with the facets that were influenced by stress, but more importantly, a program that could address the multitude of needs and factors that were required for a program to improve the well-being of those in need of assistance. Saunders et al. (2019) presented the importance of stress reduction on the physical health of the officer, but it was shown that timely intervention had positive influential factors on those that were able to overcome stress properly. The study would allow for all levels of a law enforcement agency to

understand that while there could be major adverse stress effects that there was a program in place that could address the complexity of the human factor allowing for the officer to remain within the profession. The varying ages of the law enforcement profession pose unique problems related to health issue that could allow for the stress influence to compound its negative influence, so proper intervention could help physical health and well-being.

Unaddressed or inadequately addressed stress leads to cascading effects on the officer and those within the personal life, which could create a feeling of being lost, so if the PCIS program shows to have a positive influence, these feelings may be lessened or confronted in a positive manner (Chrwestopher et al., 2020).

There has been one constant that has remained influential in the law enforcement profession, and that was the loss of personnel. Retention and turnover have been a problem for over a decade, and within the last few years, it has only increased. While retention and turnover were not always related to negative stress, the ability to reduce one would allow for agencies to retain more officers. The significance of the retention allowed for additional manpower that could ease work-related stress but allow for the needed services to the public that falls within the crisis of the agency. While it was not possible to reduce the occurrences of a critical stress event or an event that results in the traumatic loss of life, the ability of the leadership to improve the well-being of the workforce only improves morale that could improve retention efforts and motivation (Bano & Talib, 2017). Cohen et al. (2019) provided research that addresses the needs and benefits of a productive and positive relationship between the community and the local law enforcement agency. The study would improve the relationship with the community by improving the available manpower but also the quality of the services that were provided by reducing the adverse stress responses that could lead to increased complaints or improper use of

force. Lower numbers of the available workforce led to long times for service calls to be answered, which increases the stress on the officers attempting to handle the call, and on the community as well.

The final significant aspect of the study went beyond just the traditional day-to-day stressors, but the correlation between a critical stress event or traumatic loss of life and the officers that were exposed to such events. The stress places officers into realms of unknown and often unexperienced emotions that could quickly reach overwhelming levels that create dangerous levels of stress that could lead to a breaking point that causes significant harm to the well-being of the officer. The breaking point could lead to suicide, family or personal life problems, health issue, and a desire to leave the profession, so it was vital to identify programs that were successful in possessing not just adequate ability to improve the well-being but has long-term ability to allow for maintaining well-being (Christopher et al., 2020; Janssens et al., 2018). It was not uncommon for a person to possess or deploy innate coping skills that improve their resiliency to stressors, and by understanding the factors that could lead to the failure of these skills, programs could be employed and evaluated to improve the well-being of those that were negatively impacted. Stress would always be present, and the unpredictability of the profession, but that does not require agency leaders to stand to the wayside waiting for officers to be adversely affected (Jansson, 2016; Lewiss-Schroeder et al., 2018). Understanding that there were programs available to assist and the areas of assistance were provided could allow for rapid interventions that could improve the likelihood of success.

Research Questions

The following research question would be addressed in this study:

RQ1: What was the impact of the completed South Carolina Post Critical Incident Seminar (PCIS) on the well-being of the law enforcement officer participants as perceived by the PCIS Peer Team Members?

RQ2: How has the PCIS process impacted you as a peer team member?

Operational Definitions

Law Enforcement officer

A person who has taken an oath of office possesses the authority to effect an arrest, enforce laws and statutes, and possess the authority to deploy force. Responsible for serving and protecting the public (Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2020: 33-3051 Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers, 200).

Occupational Stress

The stress that occupies day-to-day law enforcement operations that results in stress from the workplace environment and factors associated with the law enforcement profession (Cohen et al., 2019).

Environmental Stress

Operation stress comes from exposure to job-related stress that comes from the duration, frequency, and severity of exposure to crimes, injuries, violence, or any other daily interactions done during the performance of duty (Bishopp et al., 2018).

Organizational Stress

Stress factors were experienced from the requirements of omnipresence requirements, work schedules and conflicts, inadequate or poor leadership, hostile work environment, and loss of personal time (El Sayed et al., 2019).

Leadership

Someone within an organization has been placed in charge of the direction of the workforce in terms of values, norms, guidance, and beliefs (Cohen et al., 2019).

Traumatic Event

An occurrence of an event that possesses an elevated physical and mental response to, such as a high-risk apprehension, shooting, vehicle pursuit, significant traffic collisions, or any other event that resulted in the loss of life (Fleischmann et al., 2018).

Critical Stress Event

An event that involves the experience or exposure to an officer-involved shooting, accident, disaster, and assault that create the feeling of helplessness, horror, and shock (Mitchell, 2016).

Spillover

The entrance of stress from an event into a person's personal life negatively influences the person's well-being and extends to those within the personal life (Tuttle et al., 2018).

Coping

The use of skills or techniques that could defuse internal stress that has been acquired from wellness programs, peer support, training, or innate abilities allowed for the proper regulation of negative stress (Ramey et al., 2017).

Resiliency

Successful adaptation to stressors would be maintaining or retaining healthy levels of well-being while deflecting the adverse effects that were harmful to the mental and physical health of the person (Hesketh et al., 2018).

Well-being

“Peoples’ positive evaluations of the lives, which include positive emotions, engagement, satisfaction, and meaning” (Quick & Henderson, 2016, p. 6).

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of the qualitative grounded theory study was to determine the impact of the completed PCIS program on the well-being of those that have suffered a critical stress event or traumatic loss of life and have been adversely influenced by the stress. The participants within the study would be peer team members that have been selected from the South Carolina PCIS that have internal knowledge of the program with the goal of locating participants that have been involved in numerous PCISs over a fifteen-year period. A set of interview questions that have been examined and vetted by certified mental health professionals that were involved in the PCIS process but were not operating within the state of South Carolina would be utilized. A limitation of the study was that the perception of the completed PCIS process would not be examined from direct interviews or quantitative statistics from the actual participants. This was because of the need for privacy by the host agency, the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, which oversees the PCIS process in the state. Additionally, the fear of the stigma of the participants seeking mental health crisis. The study was intended to examine the perception of well-being from the viewpoint of the peer team members.

Summary

Bishopp et al. (2018) provided the interesting yet not unusual fact that the law enforcement profession was one that places those within the field under stress levels that could have an adverse influence on numerous physiological and mental health factors from daily work exposures. A variety of stressors were experienced and were acquired from occupational, environmental, and organizational stress, which were known to create a compounding effect of

stress and its negative influences (Chitra & Karunanidhi, 2018). Law enforcement officers would employ coping methods that have been acquired naturally from life experiences, training, or peer adaptation, but these typical methods could become increasingly overwhelmed with duration certainty and severity of stress created from a critical stress event or traumatic loss of life. The failure to address the stressors from critical stress events or traumatic loss of life would drastically influence the well-being of the officer. These influences could rapidly manifest into a spillover into the private lives so as not to have allowed for any safe area to decompress. The negative responses could lead to officer suicide, alcohol and drug usage, domestic violence, and many others (Turgoose et al., 2017; 2017; Tuttle et al., 2018) Therefore, a program needs to be utilized to intervene in the new harmful stress in attempts for stabilizing the negative downside improving the well-being of the officer.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

It was not unusual for a law enforcement officer to experience stress daily, and it may not have an adverse influence on that officer's mental and physical health; however, long-term exposure to higher stress levels would create a wide array of problems for that officer if it was not addressed in an appropriate manner. It was the levels of stress that have been a constant focus of researchers to develop an understanding and possible interventions into the unique and evolving environments in which law enforcement officers were required to operate (Stancel et al., 2019; Tuttle et al., 2018). The law enforcement officer could arrive on what may be called a benign scene only to have it turn into a deadly force encounter. The rapid change could create mental health issue that must be addressed and could allow for the law enforcement officer to remain a productive member of the agency as well as the community. As generational differences present personalities with set expectations for what the profession has to offer, there must be an understanding of the internal and external stressors that could lead to significant mental and physical health issue. It was by developing coping skills that could allow law enforcement officers to deal effectively with the stressor. However, these traditional and often effective methods of coping may not be sufficient to reduce dangerous stress levels created by a critical stress event (Arble et al., 2018; Civilotti et al., 2021; Harris et al., 2017). Agencies must be accepting of the proactive nature of the Post Critical Incident Seminar (PCIS), and the mental health assistance that could influence the well-being of the participant after its completion (Sumanen, 2020).

The PCIS process was intended to prevent the stressors of the critical event to enter into the personal and professional life of the law enforcement officers by creating an environment

that could address the critical stress event directly (Sumanen, 2020). The lack of intervention could create a desire or need by the person to self-diagnose that could lead to burnout, anxiety, domestic or interpersonal violence, and suicide. It was the understanding of the nuances of stress-created traumatic events that have a loss of life that validates the importance of seeking mental health interventions. The failure to intercede created a dangerous prospect of a disastrous outcome to the officer and others (Morgan & Miles-Johnson, 2022; Newell et al., 2021; Price, 2017). It was not possible to prevent the continuous exposure to the stress that was within the profession, but without intervention the mental and physical issue could manifest to a level that could lead to negative responses by the officer that could even lead to suicide. This chapter would provide a review of the research strategy that was utilized to develop the materials for the literature review and the topic of the dissertation. The chapter would present information on stress and the general strain theory, contributing factors towards stress, variety of stressor environments, negative physical and mental health outcomes, exposures to traumatic events, family and personal problems, and current information on the PCIS process.

Literature Search Strategy

The efforts to research stress and its influence upon the law enforcement professionals has been used to determine the foundation of stress, and to serve to observe that the need for effective interventions was a constant focus of new research. The research topic requires that a foundational understanding of the current research on stress, so it could be mediated or influenced by the completed PCIS process. The literature for the dissertation was identified, and examined by using the libraries of Liberty University, University of South Carolina, and Saint Leo University which were provided via the online library pages of these universities. General searches were conducted via Google Scholar to identify specific articles that pertained to the

various items that were needed within the study, and access was obtained via the universities' libraries or free sourcing that has been granted to the universities by the various publishing entities. Peer-reviewed journal articles were located within the various databases provided by the online libraries: Lexis-Nexis, ProQuest, SAGE Premier, EBSCOhost, and APANet. The following keywords were used to locate the peer-reviewed articles: stressors in law enforcement, effects of stress, interpersonal violence, domestic violence in law enforcement, resiliency, coping strategies, coping, organizational stress, environmental stress, occupational stress, burnout, police suicide, traumatic events, secondary traumatic events, critical stress intervention, post critical incident seminar, substance abuse in law enforcement, chronic stress exposure, and well-being.

To properly evaluate the need for the research on the impact on the well-being of those that participated in the PCIS, the research effort focused on locating peer-reviewed journal articles within a five-year period. However, the need for older research was required to show not only the progression of research into stress and its adverse effects, but also, the lengths at which the profession has been confronting the variety of problems continued exposure or traumatic event exposure could create. Efforts were focused on identifying research that supports the needs for interventions within the parameters of this research while using the research to create a comprehensive view to support the theory. While there was research on the PCIS process, no discernable research has been conducted on evaluating the PCIS process within the viewpoint of the peer team members. It was the totality of all the research that provided the gap in research that supports the need for the study to be conducted in a qualitative manner. The research within this review contains 93 percent from peer-reviewed courses and the remaining seven percent from other acceptable sourcing.

Theoretical Framework

The effort to determine the impact on the well-being of the completed PCIS process by its participants requires a full understanding of the stress, its contributing factors, and the causations required a framing to create a foundation in theoretical framing. The framework was needed to create and provide the foundation of the research effort, but to also examine the gap within the research that supports the topic of study. The final product would be examined by professionals as well as educators within the field of study to a rigor that was significant to identify any flaws, validity, or reliability issue with the completed research (Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Kivunja, 2018; Varpio et al., 2019). Stressors within any realm or profession would create adverse effects that propagate in strain upon that person's life both professional and private. Therefore, it was valid to examine the stressors within this dissertation using the general strain theory which has a strong foundational base to support the examination of the law enforcement officer in the criteria of stress and well-being. The goal to research the use of the PCIS to influence the well-being of the participant would ultimately reduce the strain of the negative forces or influences. Bias (2020) addresses the need to have an effort to mitigate, reduce, or relieve the strain created by the varying stressors was vital. The foundational theory of general strain could be proved by understanding the influence on law enforcement stress (Crampton et al., 2004).

Bernard et al. (2019) provides an understanding of the general strain theory that was formally known as Agnew's general strain theory. It was important to note that any reference to the general strain theory would be founded by Agnew's base theory. Within this theory, the ability to show that a strain was present requires that three elements within the theory were satisfied. While the lack of one of the items could reduce the reliability of Agnew's, there may

be strain present under an additional reason based on the current research available. The first element that should be present was the lack of achieving goals. Law enforcement officers may have the lack of reaching professional goals that were in place by the employing agency, those given by the officer's peers, and a set of expectations that were created by the officer. The loss of positive stimulus within the person's life was missing, prevented, or removed accounts for the second element. The difficult aspect of this element was that it requires it to be observable in some form. The adverse effects of the absence of positive stimulus leads to the third element which was the presence of negative stimulus or the existence of negative stimuli in the person's life. Overall, the resulting negative relationships would maintain until an intervening force was introduced (pg. 163).

With the enormous amount of information and studies that have used this theory, it could create a level of misunderstanding that requires clarification. The complexity of strain was not limited to direct strain that was occurring, but it also could include strain that would occur when the person was within proximity to another person's strain. Vicarious strain was a form of strain that could be assimilated or influencing others unintentionally which allowed for an understanding of how the numerous forms of stress within law enforcement could be projected upon those around it (Bernard et al., 2019). General strain theory does create a complication because of new aspects that were being discovered or presented by continual research. It was from the more recent findings that new aspects of strain were present and could apply to stress events as presented in this research. Bernard et al. (2019) postulated that the first aspects relate to creating various anger levels based on unjust or unintentional actions. The second aspect of strain was the increased levels of magnitude that were formulated from centrality, severity, and the duration of the strenuous event. Last was the desire or need to remove or eliminate the

strains by any means available to the person regardless of the potential of negative outcomes.

The maladaptive behaviors could create solutions that were deemed illegitimate or un-rational coping mechanism that created a perpetuation of stress.

The general strain theory does provide a foundational base for the research efforts within the dissertation, and the information that would be provided within the literature review concerning the variety of aspects related to stress would allow for a correlation between the theory and adverse stress effects. In a study that examined 1,400 Texas law enforcement officers, Bishopp et al (2020) confirmed that there was a link present that showed that stress and misconduct were related to each other. The study discovered that as stress increased, so was the probability of misconduct. Regardless of the race of the officer, there was a significant relationship of the unjust levels and misconduct, so that it negatively stained the officers' ability to perform the task lawfully. Since stress could be presented within different situations, a study was conducted by Kurtz & Hughes (2021) that discovered the relationship between dangerous situations or traumatic events and the increased presence of stress levels that were considered to be a negative influence response that would lead to deviant behaviors of actions. Deviant behaviors were not universal or similar to each person, so it could span a spectrum of responses that may be undetectable for others. Within an interesting study that viewed similar problems with strain and deviant behaviors, Zapolski et al. (2018) presented that those juvenile offenders under high levels of strain became morally disengaged, and would present aggressive behaviors. It would allow for the probability that there was a strong correlation between the duration and proximity to the strain that could lead to inappropriate and deviant responses.

Police Stress and the General Strain Theory

Working within what has been considered to be a significantly stressful profession would place those working in the field in forms of stress that while similar to other high demand occupations, law enforcement was unlike others that place the person within some constant form of stressful environment that always has the probability of traumatic and violent interactions (El Sayed et al., 2019). To understand the possibilities of errors or miscalculation in judgment decisions made by law enforcement officers, there has to be a comprehension of the stressful profession that requires decisions in calls for service, and more importantly in high level critical stress events that place the person under severe mental and physical strain (Zavala & Kurtz, 2017). Bishopp et al. (2019) discussed the negative emotions that were generated from stress which allowed for the correlation of Agnew's strain theory and the variety of stressors within law enforcement. The strain theory was not unique to just this profession, but aligns with any profession that has the ability to create negative stimuli that could increase the levels, duration, and proximity of the events' ability to influence a person in an adverse manner. The foundational design of society requires that law enforcement officers operate in a dynamic and fluid environment that requires a comprehensive knowledge of laws and the sense of omnipresence that could serve to elevate stress levels (Lianos & McGrath, 2017). Within two studies, the foundational strain and the various influences of citizens and political forces were found to require constant adjustment to properly serve society. It was the additional strains of these forces that increase the exposure levels of stress (Bano & Talib, 2017; Bishopp et al., 2018).

Further review of available research provided that the police culture provides additional stressors for those operating within the law enforcement profession. In research by Burke (2018), it was the culture that was based within the context of the paramilitary or militaristic

structures that allowed for the introduction of influencers such as the leadership of the organization, the political needs, and the limitations of activities that may be viewed in an unfavorable light. These actions could create a culture of negative strain when the lower-level officers believe or interpret these limitations as a waste of time. This could create an interruption in the workflow of the agency reducing its ability to service its community and increasing levels of stress. The politics that were injected into this training event would affect all ranks. Burke (2018) and Cohen (2019) found the influence of cultural response from strain created a level of police cynicism within the rank-and-file officers that could reach a level that only increases throughout the officers' years that created increased levels of stress. These levels of stress were very high and serve to create a direct strain on the abilities to perform daily tasks properly. Once the police culture develops cynicism, the viewpoint of the leadership and management of the agency would become reduced and be deemed ineffective to satisfy the requirements of the lower levels of rank. The stress from cynicism would contribute to the inability of the workforce to complete tasks properly and with minimal human error. This error could lead to unintended consequences which only serve to foster more cynicism.

It was expected and desired that law enforcement to protect society from the criminal elements that intend to harm, and it was straining on the agencies with unrealistic expectations to reduce violent criminal acts including the tragic loss of life. It was from research by Violanti et al. (2016) and Violanti et al. (2018) that there were five frequently observed stressors that would be obtained from the use of the Spielberger Police Stress survey that examined 365 police officers. Responding to or handling family disputes and interactions involving the battering of a child has the highest stressors. Incidents involving the taking of a life in the line of duty was the third highest with the loss of a fellow officer rating fourth. The last one was the requirement to

attend court issue taking away from off-duty time or working a secondary employment. The failure to intercede could increase the frequency and duration of strain that in turn rapidly could increase the harmful stress. It should be noted that there was an alteration based on gender for the last stressor. For females, it was the lack of acceptable supervisor's support. In all that strains society and those that were sworn to protect, the social aspect of the desire for safety would remain constant yet it would remain fluid based on the interactions between the forces.

Bano and Talib (2019) presented that it was this strain on the need for safety would have an influential factor on the various aspects of the law enforcement agency as well as the officers. The direct stressor for the strain would be the occupational and organizational factors that may or may not be controllable. Since the profession was fluid, dynamic, and ever sensitive to inner and outer influencers, the profession becomes highly stressful. Sadly, the issue could be compounded by the introduction of environmental stressors that could alter the perception of all parties. The human element in any formula would remain unpredictable, and it was this unpredictability that places the officers under levels of strain and stress that was not often felt in other professions. It was through the understanding of the strains that occur to the law enforcement agencies and professionals that a stronger foundation for the specific stressing aspects could be presented. The stress from what were considered routine calls that rapid and uncontrollably deteriorate to the use of deadly force, traumatic loss of life, and numerous other outcomes that create an unhealthy environment that must be addressed to allow for the officers exposed to have a productive life.

Stressors in Policing

The study of stress and law enforcement has been a continuous effort over the last 25 years (Violanti, Charles, et al., 2017) (citation?), and as the profession encounters and endures

every changing ebb and flow of the public, the need to understand the causes and effects of stress on the law enforcement officer would continue to be necessary. The need to recognize and understand the importance of intervention would be present within the law enforcement paradigm, so that was why evaluations of programs need to be conducted to determine the effectiveness to what extent. “The nonspecific response by the body to any demands made upon it” (Crampton et al. 1995, pg. 10) serves as the foundation of any study into the effects of stress. The definition was over 25 years old and as the various influences and adverse effects of stress were presented, it would remain constant. The physical and physiological ailments that were created from the profession would vary from person to person, so it was imperative to understand that the stressors would contribute to a variety of adverse responses. These variances were not uncommon within the realm of stress and each event may influence the person differently each time exposure was occurring. The variety of job tasks or assignments would create varying levels and types of stress exposure, but regardless, the innate nature of long rotational shifts, on-call requirements, and other varying requirements often contribute to the law enforcement officer missing significant family events, birthdays, holidays, and other events involving family or friends that could create high levels of stress on the family or personal lives of the officer. The frequency and duration requirements for calls involving domestic violence, crimes against children, traumatic loss of life, or numerous other serious crimes serve as constant stressors (Burk, 2018; Qureshi et al., 2019; Violanti et al., 2016).

During a five-year period, 365 law enforcement officers were examined to determine the highest rated as well as the most significant stressors that were influencing the participants during their workdays. Violanti et al. (2016) was able to categorize 120 stressors, and specifically, 60 stressors that would have a significant influence on emotions and influence.

Researchers went further into the data and identified the top 10 stressors that provide the most significant negative influential effects on the law enforcement officer. the most significant what: issue?. These significant stressors, not in any specific order, were felony crimes in progress, the danger of on-the-job violence, exposure to criticism towards policing, working secondary employment, inadequate or poor equipment, family disputes, limited manpower, having officers not working to acceptable levels, vehicle or foot pursuit dangers, and the need to rapidly make decisions in a critical stress event. One of these 10, on-the-job-violence, was expanded upon in two studies by Cohen et al. (2019) & Powell et al. (2014) concerning the traumatic violence that was experienced. The violence that includes the loss of life or significant or severe injuries provides one of the most extreme and significant stress reactions in the participants of the two studies. The level of stress would increase even more when the victims of the crimes were children and females.

Within the studies that have been examined, stress infiltrates every aspect and level of law enforcement regardless of the position or rank that the person holds. What was truly significant was that it was not just the type of stress that created issue, but rather, the severity of the stress and the duration of exposure. Interestingly, it was not always the rapid decision making or traumatic loss of life that could lead to stress overload. Duxbury & Halinski (2018) researched the issue, and it was discovered that hostile or confrontational citizens, violence observed or received, and the presence of firearms could serve as the main stressors. The requirements of the family such as dependent crisis, work overloading cause the person to miss family functions, and the policing culture, and the requirements for having a strong persona while interacting with the public only complicates these matters. One aspect of the profession that appears to remain a constant and uniform stressor was the required work schedules that

require rotations that disrupt the stability of life needs. It was a very significant strain and stressor that spillover fluidly between the work and private lives of law enforcement officers (Bano & Talib, 2017; El Sayed et al., 2019; Qureshi et al., 2019). Public influence upon law enforcement and its leadership created a socio-political context that requires conformity and performance that serves the public in a manner that reflects the gratification of the public's needs. If these needs were not properly satisfied, the citizens could exert a level of force to alter the enforcement efforts of the agency. If not properly addressed, the political force could be misconstrued into stress that could create moral stress or conflict that could demoralize the officers (Saunders et al., 2019).

Occupational Stress

Within any profession, there would be some form of stress that would be experienced, but law enforcement officers were subjected to varying dangers that create a product of stress that may not be understood by others. The job tasks within the field include maladaptive anger, unreasonable workloads, work requirements that could be altered at a moment's notice, high speed chases, traumatic loss of life, and shooting incidents (Chitra & Karunanidhi, 2018; Doyle et al., 2021; Gutshell et al., 2017; Soomro & Yanos, 2019). By examining a cohort of 300 active law enforcement officers, Soomro & Yanos (2019), the rigors of the profession were examined to determine the occupational and organizational stress factors that influence the mental health of those that were exposed. As with the previously presented research, the severity of the stressors was not the only factor in preventing or inhibiting a person from deploying acceptable coping skills because the frequency also had a major influence. Therefore, like other literature that was reviewed, the frequency and severity of the event have a direct impact on the well-being of the law enforcement officer. Following the theoretical framework of the general strain theory, the

study supported that the frequency of the stressors was directly related to the framework.

Without some form of coping or resiliency efforts, the person may succumb to numerous adverse effects.

Chitra & Karunanidhi (2018) discovered that the ability to diffuse the occupational stress was required for the person to adjust, and the resiliency to return to being an effective law enforcement officer. However, a key point in the study was that the main reason that assistance was not sought was because the person was reluctant to seek help. In a remarkable study that spanned a period of four years by Doyle et al. (2021) and Gutshall et al. (2017), it was identified that there was a relationship between loss of cognitive performance and anger. By examining the occupational stress in the categories of unreasonable workloads, violent crimes, work expectations, and responding to significant emotional calls, the stress created from the event exposure requires some form of mitigation. The failure to intervene resulted in aggression and anger that was maladaptive leading to burnout and cognitive performance limitations that would spill over into non-stressful events. The personal life and those included in that part of the officers' lives were very subjectable to the stressors. The loss or introduction into the interpersonal lives could create a feeling of disconnection, which could lead to the officer to be viewed as a stranger. These parties were subject to the invisible forces created by the occupational stress (Friese, 2020; Lewis-Schroeder et al., 2018).

Environmental Stress

El Sayed et al., (2019) presented those environmental influences were considered to be a major stressor which was the area of operations that the law enforcement officers operate and encounter. This was an unpredictable and fluid area of work that could go from stationary and benign to one that has life threatening outcomes. The negative impacts of environmental stress

could create the feeling of no or lack of sleep, sleep deprivation, and what could be other responses within this research that could be deemed a basic response. Environmental stress was present when there was violence, loss of life, trauma, or in situations that which the officers were required to employ varying levels of force (Bishopp et al., 2020; Bishopp et al., 2018).

Returning to the theoretical framing of severity, frequency, and duration of strain exposure that transitions to stress, Bishopp et al. (2018) examined the levels of stress based on the locations that possessed high levels of densely populated areas, which resulted in validating that the those assigned to highly dense environments were subject to higher stress levels. In a 2020 study, the three theoretical items were to be present while the officers were immersed with those that were being serviced. The exposure to the environment led to negative effects of stress being observable (Bishopp et al., 2020). It was not just the population that elevated stress within an environment, but also, the uncertainty of the environment. The paring of the uncertainty of the environment was only compounded by the very nature of law enforcement. Some form of intervention must be performed to reduce the effects of stress because it was not possible to remove the stress of the operational environment. This could especially be extremely high after a critical stress event because if the officer could return to work, it may be in the same environment as the event (Hesketh et al. 2019).

The inability to allow for adjustments within the context of environmental stress could lead to judgment errors that could lead to an elevated stress level (Tsai et al., 2018). It was the evaluation of 548 law enforcement officers in the state of New York from 21 agencies on job stress discovered that regardless of the experience level, educational level, race, or sex that the levels of stress were equal among these variables. The environmental stress or what the participants identified as environmental stress maintained a negative influence on the officer, and

the stress would infiltrate all aspects including personal relations. There was a constant variable that showed increased levels regardless of the previous variables and it was related to rank. 41.8% of the participants that were supervisors displayed high stress responses than those that were not holding such positions. This allowed for an understanding that the increase in rank would serve as a higher probability of stress within the environmental context. In further review, research that was performed by Padyab et al. (2016) & Tyson (2022) showed that environmental stress could be attributed to higher levels of burnout, and the emotional exhaustion created a lapse in judgment that could have a negative influence on depersonalization. The aspect of questioning oneself could increase stressors that could lead to facilitating actions that were indicative of poor decision making. The depersonalization was further pressed forward into the stressors of the officers when the actions or responses were covered constantly by the media, and this was especially significant when the event was a traumatic loss of life or a critical stress event. The environmental stress would lead to depersonalization and emotional exhaustion, furthering the negative responses to the stressor (Saunders et al., 2019).

Organizational Stress

Regardless of the position, sworn or non-sworn, the presence of varying stressors would be present within the organization. There were healthy levels of stress in any organization even that outside of law enforcement, but likewise would be the presence of negative stressors (El Sayed et al., 2019). Since any organization was conducive to stress, there have been numerous studies examining the issue, including specific examinations of organizational stress within law enforcement. Saunders et al. (2019) showed that the structure, organizational structure, and the leadership of the organization would influence the personnel, and it would be further compounded by the introduction of social and political aspects that directly influence all, but

more likely at the executive levels. Law enforcement has numerous responsibilities to service the population that requires unpredictable and dynamic rotational shift changes, and this was further complicated for those that serve in the investigative sections of any agency. The reasoning behind this was the fact that this group was required to perform on-call duties or callouts to crimes, so stressors reach this area as well (El Sayed et al., 2019; McCreary et al., 2017; Saha, 2016; Violanti et al., 2016). The higher expectations for performance would increase as the person was elevated in rank or transferred to a high-profile position. It was not unlike any other profession; however, the law enforcement profession directly influences the well-being of the population and the officers that were serving (Cote, 2017; Griffin & Sun, 2018).

A significant influence within any organization was the inherent and created subcultures. These subcultures create a level of influence on those that were exposed or involved by determining who would be within the in or out grouping (Weeks et al., 2017). Within the span of control and the power of influence from the leadership role, it was not surprising that the supervisors possess levels of power to be used in the completion of missions or tasks. Adams & Mastracci (2019) and Runi (2016) presented in the findings of the research that there was value in the commitment to the organization. It was expected that officers within the organization to identify and conform to the established norms and values. The lack of compliance with these items would be viewed in an unfavorable light and could lead to isolation from the core groups. Being accepted into the in-group could reduce levels were stress within the organization. Likewise, the failure of the upper tier to provide a solid foundation of expectations could disrupt the balance of the organization. Isolation from the core group within the organization could create significant levels of stress that were disruptive to the ability to perform required duties.

There were already levels of ambiguity that could be difficult to understand (McCreary et al., 2017; Soomro & Yanos, 2018). The consequences that lead to becoming part of the out-group lead to additional stress because of various retaliation such as loss of additional time off, undesirable beat or duty assignments, or being required to work mandatory off-duty tasks (El Sayed et al., 2019).

Stress on Physical and Mental Health

Remaining within the theoretical framework, the certainty and frequency of exposure to traumatic stress events increase the levels of stress that would have a direct effect on the physiological aspects of the officer, and it requires the officer to observe the need to adapt. If not properly adapted, the maladaptive response would have major impacts on the physiological and psychological health of the officer (Chopko et al., 2016; Civilotti et al., 2021; Lewis-Schroeder et al., 2018; Tsukerman et al., 2020). Research conducted by Violanti et al. (2017) identified that stress incursions present a significant influence on cardiovascular well-being. There was a higher level of myocardial infarctions, high blood pressure, diabetes, atherosclerosis, and stroke which requires effective mitigation from stress relieving interventions. The health effects of stress of compounded by the unusual and often unhealthy eating habits that were dictated by the calls for service resulting in an unhealthy diet. Inappropriate or ineffective stress responses would greatly increase the probability of a significant heart attack that may be triggered by high-intensity and sudden police actions (Han et al., 2018; Magnavita et al., 2018, Zilioli et al., 2016).

The varying stressors that involve the frequency and intensity continue to align with the strain theory of the study. Three hundred thirty-eight participants were involved in testing the levels of awaking cortisol, and not surprisingly, these levels were significantly higher when the law enforcement officer frequently encountered intense encounters (Violanti et al., 2017). A

significant study that covered 13 years examined 860,221 public safety employees, which included firefighters, law enforcement, and emergency medical personnel from 2002-2014, showed that there was a drastic increase in the probability of suffering from liver damage associated with alcohol, mood, and mental disorders, peptic ulcers, lumbar problems, and dyslipidemia (Han et al., 2018). The major health problems coupled with mental health issue were naturally occurring when inadequate interventions to the severity and frequency of the exposure to traumatic events. However, the profession does not afford the officer the time, place, and choice of violent and traumatic encounters, so it was imperative to know that major health issue would manifest in the events that were not addressed (Price, 2017).

The mental health of the officer was directly linked to the well-being of the personal and professional life of the officer. It was unfortunate that many officers avoid seeking mental health crisis because of the stigma associated with it. It was imperative that early detection and intervention occur to prevent the negative outcomes that may be inevitable. The fear of retaliation, loss of employment, or labeling as being weak leads to avoidance. In other cases, it was the fear of facing the events that created the problems (Morgan & Miles-Johnson, 2022; Newell et al., 2021). The fear of seeking mental health services created one of the most significant barriers to assisting those in need. Once the officer interprets the climate of the agency as assisting, the fear of loss of side employment could create financial troubles that could spillover into the workplace, creating additional stressors (Arble et al., 2018; Chitra & Karunanidhi, 2018; Hansson et al., 2016). The exposure to traumatic events to non-active crimes could lead to mental health issue based again on the duration, certainty, and frequency of exposure. Something that may not elicit a response from some may create a response in others. Those that were impacted suffer from syndromes such as posttraumatic stress syndrome,

neurosis, anxiety, emotional challenges, and suicide. Once these begin, they could begin to create unhealthy responses, which create these secondary traumas (Chopko et al., 2016; Seigfried-Spellar, 2017; Soomro & Yanos, 2018). While traumatic stress events pose the obvious risk of adverse response, there does remain the probability that routine or non-stressful or non-threatening events could create the feeling of hopelessness and separation that would have an influence on the collapse of the officer's mental health (Civilotti et al., 2021).

Stress Influencing Alcohol and Substance Usage

Bishopp et al. (2020) related that the increase in stress could lead to the unhealthy and dangerous use of alcohol or other substances that leads to alter the ability of the officer to fully process the events that led to the stressor. The unhealthy response created a maladaptive response action that aligns with the strain theory of this research. Once the use of either one or both of these to self-medicate, there could be increased levels of anger and emotions that could become uncontrollable. Without proper and timely interventions, the control of the emotions would deteriorate into depression, anxiety, and many other harmful mental health outcomes. It was not uncommon for emotions to transcend work barriers to infiltrate the profession and personal life of the officer (Chopko et al., 2018; Doyle et al., 2021; MacEachern, 2018). The spiraling effect towards dependency and frequency of use would continue to increase over time if untreated. Collazo (2020) presented that the probability of increased alcohol consumption to harmful levels damages the cognitive ability to intervene alone. To further influence the usage of these substances, the increased work hours, either by design or choice, could become an influencing factor on the ability to make rational decisions. When a person becomes so influenced by stress, the blood performance could become inhibited, just as if the person had an alcohol concentration of 0.05%. Therefore, the stress frequency and duration could create the

inability to make rational or rapid decisions in a profession that requires it daily (Tasi et al., 2017).

The theoretical framework continues to be supported by traumatic stress that was applied to first responders. Doyle et al. (2021) presented the findings of a study that involved 201 first responders in determining if traumatic stress would increase the usage of substances to control adverse reactions. The study showed that the participants were more susceptible to the influence compared to those that had not experienced a traumatic stress event. Those that serve the public in the roles of first responders would eventually be exposed to levels of stress that influence that person to levels that create an unhealthy mindset which inhibits the ability to have a life of meaning and well-being. The stress would increase the probability of substance usage and the possibility of its abuse, thus affecting their behaviors (Doyle et al., 2021; Violanti et al., 2017). It was not uncommon for this topic to sway the reader to imagine or correlate that the substances being abused were illicit or illegal. The assumption of this information was dangerous and erroneous at best. It was likely that the person could and would use prescription drugs that were given to them by medical professionals. These medications could be obtained from a trusted friend or confidant or lawfully subscribed to the officer. As the issue progresses, it would not be unusual to see fits of rage and anger if those near the person do not assist in sustaining or acquiring the medications (Willison, 2020). The secondary traumatic stress that could be experienced by those suffering from PTSD could overcome any traditional coping systems or tools, leading to an increase in substance abuse. The issue of secondary traumatic stress that has to be fundamentally understood was that it could occur from stress levels reaching an unmanageable level, thus overwhelming the person (Collazo, 2020; Doyle et al., 2021; Friese, 2020; Greinacher et al., 2019).

Stress and Suicide

While mental health crisis remains a major issue within society, law enforcement officers were interacting with this group sets more than ever before, which requires officers to receive training in such matters. The ability to recommend or call for assistance with other resources has proven to be extremely helpful, yet there were officers that require similar treatments that never reach out (Marzano et al., 2016; Violanti et al., 2019). The knowledge and skills available to these officers in the identification and the reduction of suicides continue to be a difficult and daunting task to address. Regardless of the rank of the officers, suicide was a problem that remains hidden even when there were positive indicators of the thoughts (Stanley et al., 2016, Violanti et al., 2019). Bishopp & Booth (2014) found a correlation between violence exposure and suicide. The study provides the theoretical framing of the strain theory after 1,400 officers were surveyed. The findings showed that there was a requirement for an effective coping mechanism, or maladaptive and unhealthy behaviors could lead to suicide. The lack of support could be a trigger for officer suicide, and the compounding effect of chronic exposure to traumatic stress from the work environment deepens the subject of effective intervention methods (Violanti et al., 2019). The research by Violanti has focused over a decade on stress and policing, and it was the in-depth and developing results that allow the determination that intensive intervention like the PCIS provides a positive intervention force. In the results from a 2016 study on the danger of suicide from chronic stress exposure, the feeling of hopelessness was identified in 378 participating officers in the study if there was a high duration of exposure to the stress (Violanti, Andrew, et al., 2016).

Roberts (2021) found that suicide was a major social problem, and the use of suicide serves as the 10th leading causation of early death. The duration and frequency of the profession

expose the officer to violent crimes and traumatic stress events. Specifically, it has been determined from this research that law enforcement officers were exposed to three traumatic events every three months. Ramchand et al. (2018) performed a qualitative survey of 110 agencies concerning the perception of suicide and the availability of intervention or coping measures. Suicide prevention was effective in the reduction of the event; however, it was the stigma of obtaining mental health assistance that could prevent the needed crisis. Interestingly, the researchers explained that there was a lack of research to support peer support of critical incidents seminars. The information fully aligns with the need for the dissertation to be conducted. The deployment of the many coping or intervention skills was productive in the reduction, but it does not allow for any relief or reduction in the strains or stressors that have created the issue in the first place (Schaible & Six, 2016; Sher, 2016). Therefore, the research concerning police suicide shows that there was a limitation in the ability to alter the influencing forces, so it was vital to have effective interventions of different styles, formats, and intensities to assist those suffering.

Stress in Burnout & Role Overload

Stress created a wide array of physical and emotional problems or issue that requires intervention, and lack of effective methods, the person could begin to burnout. This was not a new concept, and in fact, research goes back to 1978 on the attitudinal, physical exhaustion, and emotional effects that were influencing the person in a harmful manner (Burke, 2018). The feeling of emotional exhaustion allowed for burnout from stress to become a problem that could not be separated from work and personal life, which created physical exhaustion. The compounding factors of the stress begin to depersonalize the accomplishments and efforts of the person (Burke, 2018; McCarty et al., 2019; Padyab et al., 2016; Queirós et al., 2020). McCarty

et al. (2019) conducted a review of literature that spanned 13,000 sworn officers from 89 agencies within the United States, which further supported the depersonalization and emotional exhaustion from stress burnout. These two factors were consistent throughout the data reviewed. Utilizing the Operational Police Questionnaire in the examination of stress burnout among police officers from Brazil and the United States, Queiros et al. (2020) found that the 2,057 participants that 11% were suffering from burnout, and the number would increase with high levels of stressors.

The loss of manpower within any organization created multiple problems that were visible from the surface, yet the danger to the officers that were required to pick up the extra work was unseen unless the supervisor ranks were observing the increased stress loads. Gong et al. (2021) provided research that presented that there could be three different levels of burnout, low, medium, and high. However, it needs to be provided that an officer may begin at any of the levels and transverse throughout the multiple levels as coping effects were employed. Stress from burnout was a leading retention problem within the profession, as Vickovic et al. (2019) discovered after surveying 641 correctional employees. The strain of the stress correlated with problems within the work-family and job satisfaction, leading to turnover. The police turnover would increase as the strain levels increase the stress levels creating burnout. Burnout has become one of the most influential factors in retention and turnover problems and created a parallel to the general strain theory (Hilal & Litsey, 2020). In terms of stress, strain, and burnout, these factors were strongly linked to job satisfaction that was additionally linked to the well-being of the officers. Agencies could intervene by providing intervention skills such as coping methods, but the intensity of the burnout stress and the factors leading to it may require a

more intensive approach (Chitra & Karunanidhi, 2018; Seigfried-Spellar, 2017; Tuttle et al., 2018).

Stress Influencing Role Overload

The stress created from role overload does not separate the genders of the officers because the person would have their own needs and perceptions of the demand or requirement to assume multiple roles or job assignments. The overload would influence the person's belief in the overload and serve to provide a negative view of motivation and levels of energy. The role overload would allow for maladaptive responses that were similar to other forms of the other stress points (Duxbury & Halinski, 2017). Qureshi et al. (2019) examined the correlation between job stress and role overload, which was the result of the daily duties that create multiple tasks from primary duties, secondary employment, and requirements from their personal lives. The rate of role overload was a dynamic factor because of the variety of tasks and the acceptance of the roles. Cox et al. (2022) found that the work to family conflict greatly influences the stress levels in the cohort, but it would cover other interpersonal relationships that may not fit into the traditional family dyad. The ability for the role overload stress to be transferred does not just occur unidirectionally, but rather, it could be a fluid flow back and forth, further straining the role identification.

Communication skills were a vital component of any relationship professionally or in a person's private life, and it was discovered that the failure to properly communicate served as one of the key factors in role overload. It was not always the communication of tasks being completed or assigned, but the communication that the strain of the roles has reached a point of overlading the cognitive and emotional abilities of the person (Lambert et al., 2017). The leadership of the organization must understand or acknowledge that with retention and turnover

issue, the presence of role overload was likely to increase exponentially to the loss of personnel and the reassignment of others. The profession was demanding already, so the additional roles only serve to systematically create new stressors that require intervention or coping techniques (Pooley & Turns, 2022). One technique that has been proven to assist in the reduction of role overload was the use of face-to-face dialog. Jensen et al. (2018) found that this technique serves as an effective approach to replacing one-directional conversation. The ability was not just the basis of having the person physically near, but being visible to the other allowed for the observation of syntax, tone, and body language. It was possible to identify that there may be role overload based on alterations to the person's traditional methods of responding in these three.

Domestic Violence and IPV

A profession that does see the worst side of humanity and its ability to commit violent acts against other human beings could influence the lives of those exposed professionally and personally. The spillover of this violence was evident within the theoretical framing of general strain toward domestic violence and interpersonal partner violence. The law enforcement profession requires officers to possess an authoritarian aspect while working, but it may also transfer into those officers' personal lives (Burke, 2018). The strain created primary and secondary strain to create an unhealthy environment. The crime may not always be visible, but the presence of significant stress from strain could serve as a predictor of this type of violence (El Sayed et al., 2020; Zavala, 2017b). In reviewing 667 peer-reviewed research articles, Mennicke & Ropes (2016) found that 4.8 to 40 percent of the law enforcement participants reported one of the two forms of violence against someone close to them. There were factors or issue that occurred to influence the violence, which was compounded by the stress from similar

calls for service, and those were abuse as a child, being involved, or witnesses. In these forms of violence as a child (Prost et al., 2020).

It was not uncommon for the public safety community to experience similar experiences in their personal lives, but it could become intertwined in such a way that unhealthy and dangerous behaviors. Violence against an intimate partner has become intertwined with many other stress concerns, but the attitude towards this violence being committed by other police officers. The violence was no longer viewed as a personal issue but one that needs to be investigated and intervened just as in public. It was the loss of a protective sanctuary that was not impeded or infringed on by stressors of the profession that allowed the officer to lash out. It becomes more complex as the officer self-medicates with alcohol or drugs. It created a cascading failure of life that leads to a significant loss of self-worth and the support structure that should help the officer (El Sayed et al., 2020; Gracia et al., 2010).

As with this form of violence, the issue of controlling the emotions created by stress becomes a key focus due to the fact that the stressors could not be controlled, but the responses may be intervened. Vazsonyi et al. (2017) reviewed 796 studies that have been conducted on self-control, and it was confirmed that there was a correlation between self-control, deviance, and criminal acts. Further research by Mamayek et al. (2017) showed a relationship was strong between the issue of self-control and anti-social or deviant behaviors. Therefore, the actions of the officer conducting this form of violence may have lost the ability to control their actions, so some form of intervention was needed. The desire to remain in control of the actions or events surrounding the officer leads to additional stress that was constant in duration and certainty that falls within the strain theory. The desire to be in control presses forward and beings to control the decisions that lead to domestic violence (Zavala & Melander, 2019). Intervention was

needed before there was a collapse of the support structure the officer depends on, and there becomes a sanctuary from the stressors of the profession. If the cycle was not broken, it would perpetuate until the violence leads to actions that were not recoverable.

Daily Exposure to Traumatic Event

When entering a profession, there were expectations and suspected knowns such as exposure to violent acts or crimes and the unfortunate traumatic loss of life. So, it was understandable that the law enforcement professional would constantly be exposed to these traumatic events, but it was the frequency, certainty, and severity that leads to increased stress levels that must have effective interventions (Bryant-Davwas et al., 2017; Collazo, 2020; Jwerero et al., 2019; Lewis-Schroeder et al., 2018). In defining or explaining what involves a traumatic event, Collazo (2020) presents it as the threat to the well-being or life of a person, either civilian or police officers, that requires instant defense of oneself from harm. Strain from the knowledge that any call for service from a nonactive to high threat encounters places constant stress that could be sustained until levels overwhelm the coping mechanisms. A traumatic event could immediately invoke a response or gradually expose itself, so it was imperative to have interventions deployed even if no signs of effects were displayed. In a research study that included 575 police officers that were involved in a crisis intervention team, Fleischmann et al. (2018) result indicated that harmful stress was not just influencing the person suffering but also those that have interactions with a police officer involved or suffering from a traumatic event. The observable discord of the trauma-exposed officer leads to significant stress response from those that were in positions to assist, but observable methods for the secondary exposure need to be in place for those providing intervention.

The issue of traumatic stress could span a person's life course, and childhood traumatic events could have a significant influence on the stress response of those exposed as adults (Prost et al., 2020; van der Meulen et al., 2019). Prost et al. (2020) discovered that those officers that were abused were more likely to have unresolved issue from sexual assaults, child abuse, or other methods of traumatic violence. The previous experiences were heightened when faced with similar events within the professional environment. These events in the officer's background may be well hidden and rarely discussed with supervisors or peers. It was imperative that there was a foundational understanding there was differentiation between posttraumatic stress and traumatic stress. It was found that regardless of the variant of stress, the exposure would result in a similar physiological and physiological response to traumatic stress. Further, the duration and frequency were correlated with the increased response from re-exposure to additional traumatic events that disrupted the coping mechanisms of the person (Harris et al., 2017; Schock et al., 2016). Since the study of childhood trauma of law enforcement officers was relatively new, its influence on the ability of future trauma exposure was an important area of future studies. The compounding effects may overwhelm traditional coping methods requiring a form of interventions that pair those officers with similar exposures and backgrounds together to assist in dealing with the events as was done with the PCIS process.

The adjustment of the human body's response to the traumatic event could be further complicated by the frequency and duration of the exposures, which continues to align with the strain theory of this study. van der Meulen et al. (2019) presented that the human response to traumatic stress alters the structural connectivity and cortisol in the brain. Cortisol was the naturally occurring byproduct of the body's release of adrenaline to a threat response, and it would create the feeling of fatigue and severe headaches as the body attempts to dissipate.

Despite knowing that there were negative attributes of the stress response, the stigma of seeking help was one that remains a barrier to improving the well-being of those that have been exposed to a traumatic event. The fear of losing one's employment only compounds the stressors' influence on avoidance of seeking help, so it was beneficial if agencies have a mechanism in place that requires critical debriefing after such events (Carleton et al., 2019; Jetelina et al., 2020).

Consequences of Chronic Exposure to Traumatic Events

The damage to the person's physiological and psychological well-being was further complicated by the repeated exposure to traumatic events and high-stress calls of service that do not allow for the person to decompress from the previous events, so that person could be in a constant fight, flight, or freeze posture. The chronic side effects of such exposures create the inability to make rational judgment decisions, use of excessive force, higher level of complaints, cardiovascular issue, burnout, among other harmful responses (Bryant-Davwas et al., 2017; Jetelina et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2016). The lasting effects of frequency and duration of exposure to traumatic events lead to high rates of PTSD within law enforcement and fire services even after one year from the initial exposure. The intervention of the person typically lacks the ability to provide efficient mitigating assistance (Lee et al., 2016; Papazoglou & Chopko, 2017). The strain of the frequent exposure to chronic stress has been discovered to attribute to the observance of PTSD in higher occurrences that reached harmful levels because the person did not seek assistance or could deploy coping skills that could reduce the stress (Schroeder et al., 2018). Even while the stigma of seeking help was present yet waning, there were those agencies that were attempting to aid with critical debriefings. The long-lasting harmful effects that were created from harmful environmental stress were not a controllable area, but the ability to provide

interventions or preventative methods was (Jarero et al., 2019; MacEachen et al., 2018; Woulds & Schuldberg, 2016).

In a study that created a baseline and examined the participants at five and ten years, Woulds & Schuldberg (2016) provided the result of 38 participants that were police officers suffering from PTSD, which was the result of chronic exposure to traumatic stress events that showed there was up to a 63 percent chance of the person displaying personality traits that were noticeably different. In a profession that requires a connection with not just the officers work with but the public that interactions occur, the loss of empathy could damage the connectivity, so it was tragic that the loss of empathy was the most significant trait that was abandoned. The ability to perform at a high level of performance and present perceptions that could reflect the desire to serve was not possible when a simple yet meaningful trait loss was devastating. Bryant-Davwas et al. (2017) examined the correlation between exposure to violence and minorities, which showed that those populations that were frequently exposed to the trauma of violence created rifts that weaken the fibers that hold the community together. The community goes beyond geographical lines into generational realms that could create levels of violence that continues to remain within the strain theory because there was a severity, duration, and severity. In terms of police officers, generational violence could transcend ranks in the organization could the cognitive alterations from it make police officers most susceptible to the negative influences of traumatic events (Civilotti et al., 2021; Collazo, 2020).

Traumatic Events Resulting in the Loss of Life

Human nature and emotions may be something that could appear to be composed while in the moment of the call for service, but there were serious ramifications concerning the exposure to the loss of life that happened from a traumatic event. An event of this nature was a

significant occurrence within the profession, and there was no one form of loss that would have similar effects on every officer that was on the scene. These events may not always gather the attention of the public as a mass, but they would grab the attention of those that experienced them (Civilotti et al., 2021; Fleischmann et al., 2018; Schock et al., 2016). The frequency, duration, and severity of traumatic loss of life fully align within the strain theory, and while the media could become captivated by the application of deadly force, the shooting could overshadow the strain and stressors of the officer applying the force regardless of if it was justified. While many officers would likely experience a traumatic loss of life from something other than an officer-involved shooting the loss of life was one of the greatest stressors known, especially if there was a connection with the person (Civilotto et al., 2021; Fleischmann et al., 2016). Civilotto et al. (2021) research findings supported the frequency and duration of traumatic loss of life as a form of death that police officers were exposed which typically takes the forms of traffic collisions, blunt force trauma, stabbings, and shootings.

Further research on the traumatic loss of life by Carleton et al. (2019) found that officers were exposed to the traumatic loss of life, further exposing those officers to the aftermath of suicides, murders, and many other forms on a frequent level. These levels reach a frequency that significantly increases the probability of mental health problems from PTSD to depression. These problems were further exasperated by the physiological changes that could strengthen the damage of the event. Petersson et al. (2017) evaluated 112 officer-involved shootings to determine the initial call type that the officer was dispatched, and astonishingly, it was found that the majority of the events were considered to be nonemergency calls such as burglaries and disturbances. The shootings evaluated in the study occurred at less than nine feet and were over within three seconds within 39 percent of the cases. Burke (2018) provided that the profession

of law enforcement was the only profession that requires a person to carry a weapon and one that requires split-second decisions on the level of force response to a perceived threat. It was possible that based on the research on the traumatic loss of life that the strain and stress would move around the agency as a whole, creating an environment that was conducive to higher stress levels. The resulting aspects would allow for the strain theory factors to be present.

Post Critical Incident Seminar

The physical and mental trauma that was experienced by an officer after a critical incident was not unique or would always resemble the previous officers' responses, so the difficulty was the ability to create a program that could address the nuances of each individual officer in attendance. The PCIS process typically involves three days, and its formatting may vary from state to state, but the foundation of an opening discussion, peer groups, and mental health professionals performing eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) as well as suicide screening (South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program, n.d.; Sumanen, 2020). PCIS process was intended to return the officer to a state of well-being that would allow for the officer to continue to have a normal personal and professional life or some resemblance of this while those exposed continue to heal (Kim et al., 2018; Price, 2017; Wild et al., 2020). In a 22-year evaluation of the long-term effects of a comprehensive program that examined suicide, Mishara & Fortin (2021) found that programs that were designed to influence long-term aspects of well-being were effective though this was by proxy from suicide the well-being was competent of healthy recovery. The researchers did address the need to have further studies conducted on other programs that were intended to provide long-term influence, which the PCIS falls within the long-term arena.

The Post Critical Incident Seminar was an advancement to the improvement and intervention into the aftermath of law enforcement officers that had experienced a critical stress event or traumatic loss of life, and it was these intervention results that further research was needed to understand its impact. In order to accomplish this, there needs to be a further understanding of actual PCIS process that the participants and peer team members attend (South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program, n.d.). Post Critical Incident Seminar 47 occurred November 8-10, 2021, and was attended by this researcher to develop research topics for the dissertation process. The daily breakdown of events remains the same, and this fact was verified by Dr. Skidmore on October 5, 2022. The seminar lasts three days of events; however, there was a staff meeting that was held the night before day one to allow the PCIS team members to go over the background of the attendees as well as a summary of the event that created the need for attendance. PCIS team members include licensed mental health professionals that were trained in Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) with one serving as the clinical director, peer team members which were officers that have similar experiences that have received specialized training to assist in guiding small group discussions, and support staff. Peer team members were paired, so that the officers within the group discussions could develop a connection because the peer team member has experienced the similar events in their past (South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program, 2022).

Day one begins early with gathering and registration of the participants, and the clinical director provides an overview of the daily events to include the opening statements, what the PCIS process involves, team member introductions, explanation of what EMDR to include that it was optional, but highly recommended, and the ground rules for all parties with information on confidentiality. The PCIS process includes the administration of five instruments that provide

the baseline for the participants because these measures would be offered via Survey Monkey at 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, and one year after the completion of the PCIS to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, and to ensure that therapeutic components were effective. Due to the sensitivity of this information, SLED would not allow any outside examination of the returned data. Once the instruments were given and completed, each person attending the PCIS would be given an opportunity to provide a summary of the critical incident to the entire group to include all peers and PCIS team members. This develops a level of trust and engagement with all those attending while allowing other participants to see that they were not alone in their respective struggles (South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program, n.d.; 2022).

Instrument one was the Impact of Event Scale (IES-R) that has been revised to include 22 items that involve the participant performing a self-evaluation, so that the impact of the traumatic event could be measured to determine the subjective distress level of the participant. It examines the daily stress levels of life and judge the distressed level over the past seven days. Instrument two was the PCL-5 which was used to determine if PTSD was present, and if so, what was the severity of the symptoms of PTSD. It was a self-reporting instrument involving 20 questions. The instrument was not intended to provide a formal diagnosis, but it acceptable for screening or making provisional diagnosis. Instrument three was the General Anxiety Dwasorder-7 (GAD-7) was a short seven self-reporting instrument that provides the clinicians with an understanding of the severity of any anxiety that may be occurring, and could identify panic attacks, social anxiety, and the presences of PTSD. The fourth instrument was the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) which was a shorter version of the PHQ allowing for rapid identification of depression by nine self-reporting questions and allowed for the determination of the level of severity of depression that the person was experiencing. These four measures were

accepted by the mental health community as valid instruments and were widely used in other areas of study or evaluations. The final instrument was the PCIS First Day Questionnaire-Principal Participant that was 13 pages in length and covers biographical information, professional experience, and incident information to last a few. It was such an in-depth instrument that it provides a significant glimpse into the reasoning behind the attendance to the PCIS (South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program, n.d.).

Days two and three were similar in that the focus was on the additional presentations on topics on trauma, coping, relationships, survival response, use of alcohol/drugs, and searching for meaning, small group discussions, and option for participants to undergo EMDR. Additionally, one of the most looked forward events was the on-site licensed massage therapist that participants see. Small group discussions were semi-structured with the attendees being asked to address specific questions. These questions were broken down into officer and support. It should be noted that the support members attending were within their own small group. For the participants on day two groups, the questions require them to present the incident and how it has impacted their lives, and what they were struggling which allowed for them to align the reactions to the lecture materials. Support groups' questions involving the impact on their lives and other family members if applicable, communication and how they were dealing with the event. Day three groups transition from the event to the coping mechanism that were being deployed. For participants, what they were doing to cope, and an evaluation of how it was working, what they had learned about the incident and coping, and what may still be bothering them. Day three for the support examines the changes their officer, their relationship goals, and if they have a better understanding of their officers' response mentally (South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program, 2022).

Mental health professionals that were certified to administer Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) were on-site to perform if the participants were willing. Participants were required to acknowledge the consent to the process. The mental health professional would also assess the participant's mental health status for possible recommendation for additional clinical assistance, but most importantly, if there were suicidal ideologies, the participant would be immediately referred for care. EMDR was first deployed in 1987 and has been proven to be theoretical sound and could be utilized for intervention in a variety of disorder. However, it was best known for its ability to provide a alter the sensations experienced from a traumatic event. It involves the use of eye movement, one of the most common forms of stimulation, while allowing the participant to reprocess the emotions, feelings, beliefs, and physical responses to the traumatic event (Jarero et al., 2019; Shapiro, 2017). EMDR was an effective coping mechanism when other forms have failed and could provide relief to long-term stress effects from a traumatic event. Those suffering from PTSD and other life stress factors could experience significant relief and intervention from EMDR. It may take numerous sessions and other interventions, but EMDR serves as an excellent foundation coping skill, and development of resiliency (Jarero et al., 2011; Jarero et al., 2019; Laliotis, 2020; Shapiro, 2017). While this was a significant tool in the intervention of negative aspects associated with the event, it was important that it was the totality of the PCIS process that was being examined for its impact on the participants and peer team members.

Officer Well-Being and Its Influence on Stress

As presented within the literature review, the sources and the negative results have been provided, so it was imperative to attempt to return the person suffering from the adverse effects to some level of well-being that may have been present prior to the traumatic event. For this

dissertation, the operational definition of well-being was “peoples’ positive evaluations of the lives, which include positive emotions, engagement, satisfaction, and meaning” (Quick & Henderson, 2016, p. 6). The use of intervention techniques that could provide long-term resiliency have been proven to improve the well-being of the officer by reducing burnout, lower stress responses, and reducing the overall negative influence of the stressors on the organization itself (Miller et al., 2017). The effort of the study was to examine the effects of the PCIS which involves forms of debriefing to reduce the negative aspects of stress. Wild et al. (2020) found that while debriefing and self-regulation did not improve the mental health of the first responders, it did provide improvement to the well-being, sleep issue, and stress levels which may allow for some resemblance of pre-event well-being. Occupational stressors associated with the profession, and the introduction of a critical stress event could easily overwhelm a person. Operational trauma could create a reduction in the overall well-being of the officers, so interventions have shown to alter the negative effects of operational, organizational, and environmental stress. Therefore, progression towards improving well-being by coping efforts could have a positive impact on the well-being beyond just the targeted officer (Demou et al., 2020).

Ryu et al. (2020) provided results from research on well-being that examined 112 police officers and its influence on job stress. It was discovered that positive intervention in job stress with a coping mechanism that has well-being within its scope of assistance provides an improvement in the psychosocial health of the recipient. Campbell et al. (2017) showed the significance that crisis intervention team training has on the well-being of those that have the techniques used while suffering a mental health crisis. Interestingly, programs that raise the need for awareness of their use by law enforcement so that every group that deploys the program was

examined in terms of well-being. The use of a program was vital, and an examination of six studies that spanned over 38 years showed that well-being was improved by in-depth programs that focus on the trauma-related psychiatric disorders that the person was suffering (Wild et al., 2020). Knowing the information allowed for using PCIS to target known trauma sources to intervene in officers' well-being. Chughtai et al. (2014) showed that trusted leader that was concerned for their people were known to be interceding in workplace stressors to improve the well-being of those under their span of control. The improvement in well-being leads to the reduction of emotional exhaustion. Granted, this may be one aspect, but it could create a cascading beneficial effect.

Summary

It was vital that the literature review show that there was a correlation between the research presented and the general strain theory that was serving as the theoretical framework for the study. The research that has been presented within the chapter shows a strong relationship between duration, severity, and certainty of the theory so that the validity and so consistency of the efforts to explain the need for interventions into stressors and their resulting physiological and psychological aftermaths. It was not surprising that stress was present within the profession and has been the focus of over 25 years of research, and it shows that while there were progressive efforts to intercede, there would always need to have evaluations of current intervention techniques and coping methodologies. The higher levels of stress could quickly and rapidly overwhelm traditional coping skills, or stress was overlooked as being normal, so when the techniques were deployed, it proves to be too late. The ability to achieve goals, introduce a positive stimulus, and remove a negative stimulus was a primary goal to overwhelm for the benefit of the adverse effects of the general strain theory. Without timely and effective use of

intervention methods stress could create a maladaptive response that continues to harm the person and those within proximity (Bano & Talib, 2017; Bishopp et al., 2019; El Sayed et al., 2019).

The dynamic and fluid nature of law enforcement was like the types of stressors that were experienced. There were limited responses to removing the stressors. Cynicism was toxic to the agency and officers within, but the complication was created when the officers lack faith and trust in its leadership corps' creating another point of failure (Talib, 2019; Violanti et al., 2016). Regardless of rank or position, the stressor of the profession transcends all lines to include influencing in a negative manner the effects of environmental, organizational, and occupational stressors, increasing the severity and frequency of the strain (Bano & Talib, 2017; Duxbury & Halinski 2018; El Sayed et al., 2019; Qureshi et al., 2019). Regardless of the type of stressor, factors of the general strain theory relating to frequency, certainty, and severity were some of the most significant factors in the psychological and physiological well-being of those in a crisis (Chopko et al., 2016; Civilotti et al., 2021; Lewis-Schroeder et al., 2018; Tsukerman et al., 2020). The long-lasting maladaptive behaviors that were created from the lack of or inadequate interventions create the feeling of losing hope in the future while intensifying the effects of stress, so the cycle of harm was completed (Chopko et al., 2018; Doyle et al., 2021; MacEachern, 2018; Violanti et al., 2017).

One of the greatest tragedies with unassisted stress was the loss of an officer by suicide. The effects of the suicide could ripple throughout that person's support structure and agency, creating further stress on those left behind. Stressors may not reach the point of suicide but could lead to domestic violence and interpersonal partner violence (Bishopp and Boots, 2014; Flynn et al., 2016; Schaible & Six, 2016; Violanti et al., 2019). The need to deploy interventions

rapidly was as critical as the technique itself. While the various methods may not address all the needed aspects, some intervention was vital, especially when dealing with stress created by the traumatic loss of life from a critical incident event. The primary goal was to influence the well-being of the officer by intervening in the dramatic and dangerous effects of negative stress in personal and professional life. Intervention into the strain theory influences could lead to long-term benefits that justify the use of programs that were geared towards that form of recovery, such as the PCIS, if proven to be effective (Mishara & Fortin, 2022; South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program, n.d.; Sumanen, 2020). It was the totality of the literature that was reviewed that solidifies the bond between the stressors and effects to the theoretical framework of the general strain theory.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

The facades that stress could create in a person's life if left unattended could cause significant physical and psychological effects that negatively influenced the person's well-being. These factors were further complicated within the law enforcement profession because a critical stress event or traumatic loss of life could occur on any call type (Doyle et al., 2021; Fleischmann et al., 2018). It was vital to fully understand how the profession could improve the responses to stressors created by these factors and allowed for additional interventions that went beyond typical coping skills. High-stress events presented levels of stress that required interventions that could provide not only stabilization but long-term abilities that improved the well-being of all parties that have been adversely affected (Cohen et al., 2019; Violanti et al., 2017; Tasi et al., 2018). Chapter three would provide the foundation for the use of grounded theory for the examination of the research question concerning the completed PCISS process. Additionally, the research design, role of the research, bias, and ethical considerations as well as other areas that would be used within the qualitative data collection would be presented. The interview questions and participants' criteria would be provided to create an understanding of the correlation between the research question and the study methodology.

Research Questions

RQ1: What was the impact of the completed South Carolina Post Critical Incident Seminar (PCIS) on the well-being of the law enforcement officer participants as perceived by the PCIS Peer Team Members?

RQ2: How has the PCIS process impacted you as a peer team member?

Research Design

The design of the dissertation was the examined influence of the completed PCISS program on the well-being of the participants that determined if the process could alter the negative aftermath and effects of high levels of stress from a critical stress event or traumatic loss of life. Additionally, to fully examined the impact of the PCIS program, the impact on the peer team members would be examined. These levels of stress have been shown to have a compounding factor since they could enter the personal lives of those involved frequented and severe exposure to stress. The ability to a reduction the negative influence on the well-being of the participants of the PCIS program has not been examined from the perspective of the peer team members that were at the foundation of the program's core. The literature review that was presented allowed for an in-depth comprehension of the various stressors and the effects of stress, but more importantly, it allowed for the identification of a gap within the research because many outcomes were measuring the mental health of the officers, and not the overall well-being. Additionally, the aspect of a qualitative study on the South Carolina PCIS program has never been performed since its inception. Therefore, it was prudent that a study was performed especially since the program was used as a foundational framework for numerous other states that were deploying the methodologies of the South Carolina PCIS. It was imperative that an understanding of the influence on well-being be established so that the program's effects could be fully quantified.

The choice of the grounded theory was based on the reason that no qualitative study has been performed on the South Carolina PCIS program, so the phenomenon of influence on well-being could be derived from the new data that had been collected. It was based on the fact that there was a strict requirement from the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) that maintained the secrecy of the participants' information that it was determined that the best source

of information would be the peer team members that were present during the entire process. The initial process of choosing the method began with a interview of the director of the program and one of its original members that shared the concern for the privacy of the participants. The issue of privacy was paramount so as not to have deterred officers that sought help because of the possibility of a data breach of their personal experiences becoming exposed. An overview of the study was presented used the template from Liberty University that was adjusted to reflect the efforts of the research project and submitted to the South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program (SCLEAP) that oversees the PCIS. On January 31, 2022, permission was granted for the study to have been conducted, and SCLEAP did provide a list of peer team members that would be willing to participate in the study. There was a requirement for the findings of the study to be released to SCLEAP when it was completed or was published..

Since the research would be conducted with the peer teams and the numerous varieties of reasons officers participate in the PCIS, that semi-structured interviews would be conducted with the selected peer team members. An interview bank of 25 questions was created for the project. It was ensured that the questions would adequately address the research effort as well as verified that the questions were in the realm of understanding for the peer team, the questions were sent to ten mental health professionals that were involved in the PCIS program. To retain the validity of the study, these mental health professionals were from the states of Kentucky and North Carolina. These two states have followed the model of the South Carolina PCIS program, so there was a lateral interpretation of how the peer teams interacted with the participants. There were nine responses from the mental health professionals that showed eight of these held graduate degrees in areas of mental health, and were board certified within their respective states. One respondent was a research psychologist pursuing her Ph.D. in the field. While there was

feedback on questions that could be combined or reworded, there was a critical point that was presented that did alter the research project entirely. The original aspect to be measured was the outcome on the mental health and not the well-being of the participants which the mental health professionals recommended changed because peer members were not certified mental health professionals licensed by the state or able to make diagnoses per se. Additionally, mental health was an extremely broad wording that could cover gambits that were not intended in this research, so a better term that would encompass the total or overall assessment would be better suited for the well-being of the participants.

Grounded Theory.

In the selection of the theory for the dissertation process, it was determined that the criteria for the grounded theory approach best aligned with the project which was creating a new theory or evaluation of a program that had never been accomplished in the past. The methodology of the collection and sampling of data from the interviews allowed for the theory to have followed the need for a critical evaluation of the topic and accompanying data that would be collected. It was by using critical inquires that allowed for an adequate examination of the social correlation between the topic and those that needed its services in the future. It was the interpretations within the field that allowed for the development of engaging information that allowed for the assimilation of techniques that did influence the hazardous outcomes of unhealthy stress (Charmaz, 2020). The testing of a theory that had not been evaluated any time prior that conformed well to the parameters of the grounded theory which had a foundational basis to create a theory or examine a new approach to an issue (Richards et al., 2018; Saco & Dirks, 2018).

The accomplishment of the theory was the ability to systematically analyze the complex data within a tool that allowed for the collection of interview data from the semi-structured format of this project allowed for the reliability of the data to have remained constant. Therefore, a systematic approach which was one of two grounded methods would be used that allowed for the theory to be processed and explained (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The ability of the grounded theory to have a comprehensive and observable set of procedures and process served as one of its greatest strengths due to the fact that the study could be replicated in the evaluation of other states' PCIS program (De Bie & De Poot, 2016; Stadtmann et al., 2018). Chang (2017) presented some interesting aspects of the grounded theory and its application with the qualitative approach in that there could be multiple or alternating sources for the data sourcing since the theory had flexible framing. The conceptualization of the methodology for the data sourcing within the grounded theory allowed for the creation of data points that could allow for a broad or narrow scope of engagement of the topic which was then coupled with the coding of the qualitative methodology that allowed for a comprehensive examination of the subject matter. This was due to the constant comparison of the points of data that have been collected by the researcher which allowed for the identification of key information while it also exposed any possible gaps that required a further examination at a later point.

Methodology

In an effort to collect the needed data on the South Carolina PCIS program and allowed for the confidentiality of those that have participated in the program as required by SLED, the decision to perform semi-structured interviews with the peer team members was determined to be the most viable option. The reasoning behind the decision was that the peer team members have the most experience within the PCIS program while the most significant contact time with

the participants. The pool for peer team members within the state was extremely viable with candidates, and the process for the selection of the members to be examined would be further presented within the next sections; however, the ability to have drawn from such a well and sufficient pool of candidates allowed for the study to be robust while it maintained the ability to have the interview process follow the needed guidelines for the project. Semi-structured interviews allowed for the base questions that were vetted to develop the foundational data while it allowed for the open-ended questions to identify areas that had been overlooked or later after coding to be determined as viable aspects for future study. The pool of 20-30 participants for the interviews would be vetted to ensure compliance with the needs of the study and allowed for a cross-sectional examination of the questions. Open coding would be optioned with the completed interviews to shift and pull the required data collection for proper coding efforts (Creswell & Baez, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study would consist of seasoned peer team members that were involved in the PCIS program. Peer team members were responsible and matched with participants of the PCIS program that have had similar or liked experiences of critical stress or traumatic loss of life event that were now adversely affecting the PCIS participant which was the reason for attendance. The peer team members were law enforcement officers that have not only had similar experiences but had been a part of the PCIS program themselves. This allowed for an in-depth and unique viewpoint to have been examined on those that were interacted with during the PCIS program. The PCIS program consisted of three days, and the peer team members would be in contact with the participants from the beginning to the end. It has been determined that up to 20 peer team members would be interviewed, and these members would have not only

15 years of experience minimum, but there would be more available peer team members available should an original participant voluntarily removed themselves from the study. A wealth of viable study candidates was available to support the research effort which could typically be a stumbling point for any research.

Rationale for Participant Size

The effort to have a full and comprehensive interview group was the primary reasoning for the size that has been chosen. The ability to obtain the needed interview responses from 15-20 participants would result in approximately 150-200 responses to the set of interview questions which would allow for the impact on the participants' well-being to be fully evaluated. The backgrounds of the peer team members provided a wealth of information on the PCIS program and its correlation to the well-being of the participants that have completed the process. The size of the participants would allow for an overall understanding of the impact of the PCIS program directly on the peer team members. The ability to have obtained theoretical saturation was possible since the target groups shared similar critical stress events or traumatic loss of life. It would be possible to reach the objective of no further obtainable information with the size of the participant group while it showed a correlation and development of the subject matters. The sizing would allow for the validation of the interview question responses further supported the research effort to determine the ability of the PCIS to influence the well-being of the completed participation process. Since this researcher only had a basic understanding of the PCIS program and has never participated within a PCIS, there was no prior experiences that did directly affect the process which went to further support the reliability and validity of the research study (Creswell & Baez, 2021).

Procedure

The research effort was first conceptualized based on literature that was reviewed concerning the unhealthy levels of stress from extreme events that law enforcement officers were exposed to within their career. It was apparent that there were numerous outlets for those that were suffering from the adverse effects, but it became apparent that there was one constant provider of support and assistance, and that was the South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program (SCLEAP) that offered the most comprehensive program that was at no cost to the participants, spouses or partners, and agency. Additionally, the negative stigma was not typically associated with the program, and it was often triggered by the head of an agency once a critical stress event has occurred. Once the program was determined to be the focus, it was with conversations with the mental health professionals, peer team members, director of SCLEAP, Dr. E. Skidmore, and my chair that the qualitative approach was chosen to consist of interviews with peer team members that would lessen the probability of negative outcomes of the participants of the study that could become issue with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Liberty University. The participants of the study would have interview questions presented during an online interview using Microsoft Teams so that the interviews could be transcribed for future use in coding, and validity challenges. The interviews would be recorded using Microsoft teams. All downloads and transcriptions of the interviews would be maintained on an encrypted drive that would be secured within my office safe at the Sumter Police Department, South Carolina. Access to these files would limited to the dissertation committee and this researcher.

Data Collection Analysis

The grounded theory was the base factor in the study while collected data from the interviews in a systematic method allowed for constant comparative analysis. It was this constant analysis that allowed the researcher to ensure that the interviews were progressing in a

manner that could adequately answer the research question that has been posed. This would allow for the theoretical framework to have determined whether some similarities or differences would need to be further examined at a later stage. Once all the data from the interviews were transcribed, and available for review, a code book was created to examine the research question that had been provided to determine if there was any influence of the completed PCIS program on the participants. Once that correlation had been identified, it needed to be determined what type of influence the completed process had on the participants as it related to positive or negative, long, or short term or any outliers that were not projected to be observable. There would that the need for the data to be examined multiple times by the code book to that determined that all aspects had been fully evaluated and noted. Should there become observable items that did not fall within an acceptable category of the coding, new coding would need to be formulated to ensure the proper capture and evaluation of this information.

Role of Researcher

The role of this research remained a presenter of the facts that have been garnered from this research effort. While there was a need for the researcher to determine the participants, scope of the study, interview questions, coding, and final analysis of the data, there always remained the understanding that any influences by the researcher that could skew the data be limited at all avenues in which it was possible. This would eliminate the possibility or probability that there could be arguments that the findings were suggestive or inconclusive because of errors made by the researcher. This researcher would have been in law enforcement for 24 years at the time of this conceptualized draft, and it was the combined knowledge and experiences that allowed for this researcher to a great deal of access to the program that was the subject of the study. The factor of access has served to reduce and even eliminated research

efforts, but the professional cooperations had been well established for over a decade, so limiting access was not a concern for the study. It was from the overall experience as a law enforcement professional and the academic rigors of the literature review that the gap in the research was identified so the study while ensuring that the efforts would move the knowledge base of the topic forward which was a key requirement for any research effort (Creswell & Baez, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018)

Bias/ Ethical Issue

It was vital that the study remain valid and intact so that it could be used to determine the effectiveness of the PCIS program for not only the state of South Carolina but also, all those states that have used the program as the blueprint for their respective programs. It was not possible to have a study that met these requirements while helping those that had suffered from the negative aspects of a critical stress event or traumatic loss of life if there was the presence of researcher bias. This would jeopardize the ethical standing, so the background of this researcher serving in law enforcement for over 24 years allowed for a solid foundation of the presentation of facts and not opinions because this had been the basis of my career that covered this span of time. The reviews by the research chair, the reader, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Liberty University would serve to maintain the non-bias of the study while it provided ethical protection for participants. The interview questions were not just examined by mental health professionals for the ability to measure the research question, but also to served as a method to protect the participants of the study from any question that could serve to be harmful when presented.

The approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Liberty University and interview questions would be presented in the appendixes of this research effort. All participants

would volunteer for the study and be informed that they could elect to be removed from the study, and all information collected within the research effort. Written consent would be obtained from every participant as well as the format of the interviews via Microsoft Teams that allowed for the confidentiality of the participants. Only those that were required to know would have any additional information on the participants, and those requested would be noted for future reference. The voluntariness nature of the participants was vital for the research effort and must remained present during all phases of the research. Participants would have the opportunity to review the completed finds and would be required to sign written waivers to participate in the research effort prior to the interview process.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the study would take place with the use of an extensive literature review on the subject matter that involves numerous peer review journal articles that meet the academic rigors of the dissertation effort, the use of interview questions that have been validated by mental health professionals that were intimately involved within the PCIS program and were licensed mental health professionals within their respective states or possess advance academic degrees, and past research that was related to the topic using the theoretical framework that was intertwined in this study.

In-person Interviews

The desire to perform face-to-face interviews was not possible due to several factors such as distance from participants, but more importantly, the dangers of the COVID-19 virus were present. The danger of exposing participants to COVID-19 had created the need to perform the interviews via Microsoft Teams which did allow for in-person interviews via the platform while it allowed for the interviews to be recorded. The presence of stable internet and protocols for

disconnection/reconnection would be presented to the participants prior to the beginning of any interview. If a participant was not able to meet the needed standards for online interviews, arrangements would be made to have met the participant in-person while providing protective measures for all parties involved. The participants' safety was and would remain foremost in this research effort.

Summary

While chapter three was not one of the longer chapters, it served a vital part of the research effort in that it provided the aspects of how the study of the PCIS program and its influence on the participants as viewed by the peer team members would be conducted. The qualitative study would utilize the grounded theory as its foundational theory, and the methodology, as well as the reasoning for the method, were provided to lay the foundation that was required to have a study that was not only reliable but valid. The roles of the researcher and the selection of the participants were explained to allow for an understanding of who and why those parties would be involved in the study to the level as to explain the rationale for these decisions. Aspects of bias and ethical consideration for the participants were identified and the efforts to not only protect the study's validity but more importantly, the protection of the participants that would be interviewed. The trustworthiness would remain in constant evaluation by the researcher, the university's IRB, and the committee that was overseeing the research effort. In-person interviews would be preferable but due to dangers still related to COVID-19, Microsoft Teams would be utilized for the interviews. With the conclusion of chapter three, the next chapter would present the findings of the research effort and the associated data that has been collected.

Chapter Four

Overview

The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of the Completed South Carolina Post Critical Incident Seminar (SC PCIS) on the participants with an additional question examined that related to the well-being of the peer team members. The general strain theory was used as the theoretical framework because of the stress created by critical stress events that law enforcement officers are exposed to during the duration of the respective duty assignments. The study was based on the grounded theory, which allowed for the determination that the general strain theory served to align with the literature review that had been conducted. This allowed for the methodology of the study and the format of data analysis for the completed interviews. The presentation of the collected data and the analysis process of that data, that included the varying coding process, will be presented. All interviews were coded manually without the assistance of any qualitative software programs.

Participants

The study was conducted in the parameters that had been set by the research proposal and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the university. Once approval was provided, recruitment efforts were performed, and a total of 20 peer team members were contacted that were identified that had the highest probability of meeting the requirements that had been established for the study. Of the 20 participants that were solicited, 11 (55%) responded with the desire to participate in the study. It was during this portion that it was discovered that five of the participants did not have the requested 15 years serves as a peer team member. This service year was selected because it allowed for the collected data from the interviews to have encompassed over three years. Reevaluation of the years of service requirement as a peer team member for the

SC PCIS was lowered to a minimum of 10 years so long as the minimum of 15 completed SC PCIS events were satisfied. Based on the totality of the timeframe as a peer team member and the number of SC PCIS events completed, it was determined to allow for the data needed to complete the study adequately. The peer team members interviewed were identified to include nine males and two females.

Participant A

Participant A has served with a South Carolina sheriffs' department for over 27 years, and it in this service that the participant did become a peer team member. The participant has been involved with the SC PCIS for 13 years and has participated in that capacity for 23 PCIS events.

Participant B

Participant B has had 35 years of service with a state agency in the state of South Carolina. The participant has participated in 40 SC PCIS events in the 20 years of service as a peer team member.

Participant C

Participant C retired from a South Carolina sheriff's department after completion of 25 years within the agency. It was during this time that the participant completed 22 years as a peer team member that, encompassed 40 SC PCIS events.

Participant D

Participant D completed 25 years with a state law enforcement agency and continued the service while also having served as a peer team member in 15 SC PCIS events over a span that covered 12 years.

Participant E

Participant E retired from a state law enforcement agency and was invited to return to work which provided this participant with over 45 years of law enforcement experience. This is the longest service time for all participants. During the provided service time, the participant completed 40 SC PCIS events as a peer team member over a period of 24 years as a peer team member.

Participant F

Participant F retired from a federal law enforcement agency after 32 years of service and became a licensed counselor in 1998. The participant was involved in the employee assistance program for the previous law enforcement agency and has been active with the SC PCIS since its inception. The participant has completed 49 of the 51 SC PCIS events and has been active with SC PCIS for 23 years.

Participant G

Participant G has been with a state law enforcement agency for about 29 years and has served as a peer team member for 14 years. The participant has completed 27 SC PCIS events over 14 years.

Participant H

Participant H retired from a police department in South Carolina after 25 years of service and has been retired for six years. The participant has been involved with the SC PCIS for 21 years and has participated in that capacity for 30 SC PCIS events.

Participant I

Participant I has served with a South Carolina sheriff's department for 23 years, and it in this service that the participant did become a peer team member. The participant has been involved with the SC PCIS for 13 years and has participated in that capacity for 22 PCIS events.

Participant J

Participant J has served with a North Carolina state law enforcement agency for just short of 31 years. The participant is very active in the SC PCIS process even though the participant resides in another state which is not uncommon. It was important to inform the participant that the study focused on the SC PCIS, and the answers to the interview were related to the SC PCIS process only. The participant has been involved with the SC PCIS for 24 years and has participated in that capacity for 45 PCIS events.

Participant K

Participant A has served with a South Carolina sheriff’s department for over 20 years, and it in this service that the participant did become a peer team member. The participant has been involved with the SC PCIS for 12 years and has participated in that capacity for 20 PCIS events.

Table 1

Participant Statistical Data

Participant ID	Years in Law Enforcement	Years as a Peer Team Member	Number of SC PCISs
A	27	13	23
B	35	20	40
C	25	22	40
D	25	12	15
E	45	24	40
F	32	23	49
G	29	14	27
H	25	21	30
I	23	13	22
J	31	24	45
K	20	12	20

Results

Coding Process

Once the interview process was completed with the 11 participants, the transcriptions were collected from the Microsoft Teams recordings that were created. The transcriptions were synced to the recorded videos of the interviews. The transcriptions were examined line by line with the audio of the interviews so that the transcriptions were free of any errors from the electronic transcription process. The process was completed twice, which ensured the transcriptions were accurate for coding. The 11 interviews were ready for the varying coding processes that were performed under the grounded theory that created the themes, codes, or sub-codes as needed. The effort involved open, axial, and selective coding that allowed for the constant comparative approach until the data saturation was obtained. The completed process required inductive analysis that used the raw data that developed the carrying codes, which then led to the completion of the themes.

The initial effort placed into open coding required the interviews to be grouped into similar questions so that the participants' responded answers to each of the respective questions were together and available. The interview responses were read line by line multiple times, which allowed this researcher to understand the correlations of the responses among the participants that resulted in the visualization of patterns or like responses to the interview questions. This was performed for all 24 interview questions. The open coding created the foundation that was required for axial coding. The open codes were then placed into respective categories that allowed for the codes to be narrowed in the axial codes that noted the frequency observed of the open codes to the axial codes. The process continued until a pattern was discovered that allowed for the interview questions to be liked grouped. It was discovered that the resulted pairs developed the themes for the research effort. For RQ 1, related to the impact of the completed SC PCIS process on the participants' well-being, the completed coding process

resulted in five themes to be created. For RQ 2, related to the impact of the SC PCIS on the peer team members, the coding resulted in three developed themes.

Overview of Themes RQ 1

The participants were interviewed from the interview list that covered 19 interview questions, which resulted in the development of the five themes that are used to address RQ 1. The first theme was harmful incidents to the participants of the SC PCIS and was collected from interview question 1. The second theme was the catalyst towards well-being used interview questions 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, and 14. Next was the theme trying to cope with the incident that was created from interview questions 4, 5, 7, and 17. The fourth theme that was created from questions 10, 13, and 18 was well-being is on the horizon. The last theme was the journey towards well-being created from interview questions 11, 12, 15, 16, and 19. There was no apparent or obvious overlap of the interview questions with the other themes. Additionally, patterns were obvious as the coding was performed, and common responses were apparent among the participants that verified that data saturation had been obtained.

Harmful Incidents to Participants

There must be a need for a law enforcement officer to have attended the SC PCIS. The need would have come from an incident that overwhelmed the coping mechanism or resulted in a maladaptive or unacceptable response. This definition was created from the coding process for incidents or events that had made the person feel their life was never to be the same. That it was a day that turned for the worse. That it was a day that turned for the worse. The events covered a variety of aspects, and regardless of the event, the event must have had a negative influence on the law enforcement officer, which was apparent during the interviews.

Participant F shared,

Probably the most probably what makes the most critical is if they're personalized. If the event is personalized so being shot or being injured in the line of duty is probably one that impacts them the most at the deepest level. A probably the second would be seeing a fellow officer injured or killed in the line of duty and witnessing that being present at the time, and probably the third, is dealing with children or family members of victims.

The presence of incidents that involved a child or children was mentioned by the participants throughout the interviews, but the death or shooting of an officer was present.

Participant G stated,

The critical incidents affect each person differently, like an officer involved. Shooting may not affect one person as it does another. But what I have been able to figure out is the line of duty death of a fellow officer and a child fatality or two of the most impactful ones that I have seen on everybody where our incidents that people react differently to those each seem to carry a huge impact in terms of trauma.

The responses remained consistent among the participants. However, another issue was raised that did not involve law enforcement incidents but those that involved events of a personal nature that involved the law enforcement officer that participated in the SC PCIS program that was evaluated.

Participant C presented,

A lot of times the one that have the most impact are the personal ones, not necessarily job related. Uh, of the sudden loss of a family member or the especially the death of a child. As far as incidents, uh law enforcement incidents, I would say anything that involves a death. Or that is at your hands, such as maybe a crash involving a pursuit, especially if it's the death of what we would call an innocent somebody, you know, just a bystander.

And really, not so much fatal shootings. But the like, the suicide of a coworker is a big one.

Trying to Cope with the Incident

The ability to properly cope with a critical stress or traumatic stress event would be hampered by inadequate or insufficient coping mechanisms that the law enforcement officer had acquired over their live course personally and professionally. The theme resulted in a definition created by this researcher as deployed maladaptive or ineffective coping mechanism used by the law enforcement officer. It is these methods that resulted in the need to attend the SC PCIS events to be returned to some resemblance of the person pre-event. Based on the responses provided by the participants, the use of alcohol appeared to be the most common tool by a person.

Participant H responded,

But alcohol tends to affect a lot with the marital problems. Many times, you know, participants get involved in legal troubles involving alcohol, whether it's driving or getting involved in some kind of domestic dispute or just missing work. You know, because they've they're drinking too much or you know, blacking out and missing whole entire day.

The next participant's response showed some of the reasons that made a law enforcement officer choose alcohol as a source of intervention.

Participant C stated,

You know, it's not illegal, it's not necessarily socially frowned upon, so drinking is probably the most common. And again, I think we talked about the functioning, the daily functioning. It affects their mood because you know, when you drink enough to put

yourself to sleep when you wake up in, you know, when you wake up from the sleep you don't feel your best. You might be dehydrated, or you know your hygiene might go down.

It is presented in participant C's response that the use of alcohol was used to address the problem of lack of sleep or avoidance of dreams of the critical stress or traumatic event. It was further presented by other participants that there were other unhealthy coping responses that were not healthy that resulted in the need to attend a SC PCIS.

Participant B shared,

They think it's gonna put them to sleep because they are having dreams at night for nightmares. They think alcohol is gonna calm them down. So they used the alcohol and drugs to kind of sleep the kind of really to put them to sleep and then two, I think they do it to to that they feel that that's gonna kinda calm him down. You getting that sleep. But it's not it's not real sleep.

The additional desire to control an uncontrollable response to stress was apparent from the interviews of the participants. Law enforcement officers had deployed isolation or refusal of shared thoughts of the events with spouses or significant others. The participants provided that the isolation created observed negative stress responses.

Participant F stated,

Well, isolating themselves is a coping mechanism. As I said before with the spouses you know, they don't want to tell them what's happened to them because they're afraid just telling them it makes it happen to them. And from my own traumas that I experienced, I know that that was a lot of the stuff that I didn't want to talk about, so I oftentimes I I the way I work with officers is I asked them if you were the spouse, and your spouse was the officer.

Participant H presented,

Yeah, gosh. Well, you see a lot of. A lot of isolation where they don't talk to people, they don't talk to their significant others. They isolate themselves away from friends and family and don't tell them what's going on and of course that creates major issues with people who are close to you 'cause they don't understand it.

The varied stress responses became visible to the participants when the law enforcement officers arrived at the SC PCIS process. The first barrier that participants stated that the law enforcement officers had to hurdle was the need to go forward with the process, and that required attendance required those law enforcement officers to have shared their event or incident. However, the wall had to be removed.

Participant D shared,

They're sitting with their arms crossed, legs crossed. They don't wanna talk. If you go up and try to talk to initiate a conversation with them, they'll talk about everything, but the reason why they're there. Sometimes those are where they don't wanna talk about their event, or there's something else

H Response

It well, I can. It's kind of hard to explain, but I can kind of look at them and tell who's having major problems and who's kind of getting along pretty good because I think we get it. And then you get the ones who have had an extreme reaction and they're not doing well. And I can tell almost by the way they walk and the way they come in, they just live very tense and uptight. They're not talking. You can tell that they don't want to be there.

G Response:

A lot of them I feel like that they are managing well. They a lot of them think that you know they're handling it in their own way. The other thing is that I I feel like is that they feel like, however. They have reacted to it, whatever their stress reaction is, I think a lot of them feel like that. It's something that only they are dealing with and they don't realize that other officers who've been involved with things deal with many of the same issues that they're dealing with.

Based on the responses from the participants, the law enforcement officers that have attended the SC PCIS process had deployed, in the majority, negative or inadequate coping skills that resulted in maladaptive aspects that are aligned with the literature-reviewed materials.

Catalyst Towards Well-Being

The barriers that law enforcement had to break into are not simple tasks or burdens that a person could stop because the person determined that it was unhealthy or harmful, but rather, the law enforcement officer required a structured process intended to adjust the misaligned natures of the stress. That needed a catalyst that moved the law enforcement officer in the needed direction of trained professionals. The theme was created from the collected codes of interview questions 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, and 14, which resulted in a definition of aspects that allowed or had to be overcome by the SC PCIS participant to be moved towards well-being.

Aspects of the SC PCIS that law enforcement officers were required to address were varied, but the peer team presented in the interviews that the trend consisted mainly of three areas that create the catalyst needed that began the process that addressed the critical stress or traumatic event.

Participant D shared,

There was one of those harder questions because the very first day, the PCIS. Yes, you've got people that have volunteered to be there, some people that don't want to be there, some people that have gone through this traumatic incident and they know what to expect to their little bit more laid back.

The first reason that a law enforcement officer came to the SC PCIS was that the agency told the officer that it was required, and the resulted response was frustration for having been told to attend the process. Participant I stated, "The unwillingness to be there, I mean that's the number one thing is you know the voluntold versus the volunteered."

G stated,

Themes and attitudes are people and sometimes not wanting to be there. Umm, sometimes being told that they had to be there some not understanding really why they are there attitudes or sometimes frustration with the department because they don't understand why the department, if they're made to come, is making them be part of this program on they basically a lack of understanding of what we are and what we do.

The second reason presented was that the person volunteered. Participant C presented, "A lot of times there's some reluctance to participate nervousness Because they not so much anymore that a lot of people are want to come or volunteer to come." Participant A stated, "It's kind of a mixture. So you know some people are there because they wanna be there because they wanna get help." The interviews showed that the reluctance was based on the lack of understanding or the presented fear of the unknown aspects of the SC PCIS. This was constant even though the law enforcement officer was told what the process involved.

Participant C shared,

Because they not so much anymore that a lot of people are want to come or volunteer to come, but in the beginning, most people were told to come, so there was we did experience a lot of reluctance because they didn't know what they were getting into.

Participant E stated,

They want to be there, but they don't know how to act. It's just kind of like you're around a bunch of strangers and they just let me go ahead and stand by myself and. And you see that change.

At this point in the coding, a pattern emerged that overlapped with a previous theme in terms of the stress response, but it served as an area that had to be overcome for the law enforcement officer to be moved forward throughout the process. The used aspect was avoidance or isolation from others that were at the SC PCIS. This included not just the peer team members or other members that represented the SC PCIS, but it included other law enforcement officers.

Participant B presented,

They are, uh, they kinda to themselves, they don't wanna talk to anybody. They don't wanna make that eye contact and I think another one is just. The not knowing they don't know what it is about, what it's the PCIS program is about. The seminar is about.

Participant E shared,

Very withdrawn. You can see and I'll probably talk about this guy later, but well, withdrawn. Very self enclosed except for the people they're around, you know. They're gonna be with here, you know. Won't make eye contact. One guy that we had one guy. I mean this when he came in. I don't know that I've ever seen a guy pull his hat down over

his eyes as far as his eyes. It's just kind of like you're around a bunch of strangers and they just let me go ahead and stand by myself and. And you see that change.

There were areas that the participants that were interviewed discussed that showed that the stress responses had carried over into the personal lives of the law enforcement officers. It was these areas that had to be overcome for the catalyst to being towards well-being. It was here that overlap had become apparent, and it was because the stress from the critical event or traumatic event had spilled over into other areas of the law enforcement officers' lives. Participant E stated, "Putting it very bluntly, a lot of times things like this just drive streaks between relationships."

Participant G shared,

One of the things that we hear most often is irritability and isolation. You hear Uh, significant others say that you know their partner is more irritable, may yell more, maybe more frustrated at home, or they're isolated.

The isolation was not just with the relationship between family but extended to co-workers and other friends furthered the stress response.

Participant B presented,

So that's one of the things that comes out. You hear a lot about it, is that the anger part. Another thing is they shut down again, not wanting to talk to the family and just the isolation. Sometimes from everybody, even the coworkers.

The isolation was not just one of the physical attributes but extended to the law enforcement officers that refused the shared information with spouses or significant others. Proposed barriers prevented the law enforcement officers to be moved forward in the healing process, and that created further stressors that could not be escaped. Participant B shared,

“Family Umm a lot of family stuff. They shut down with their family. They're not talking to their wives.” Participant D presented, “Family and situations where they're not able to talk about in their spouses or having a hard time dealing with what they went through.”

Participant E stated,

Life stressors on kind of on the other side of the coin is a family. Whether or not I wish my wife was here or I can't get my wife to come, I would like for her to be here and I think the stress are on both of those would, to me would be the acceptance from them of what happened and being supportive of.

By far the most presented information that forced the process that moved the law enforcement officer into the SC PCIS process was the first day. It was considered to have provided the highest level of stress that law enforcement officers would have experienced. The day required the stories that created the need for the SC PCIS, and it was very difficult for the stories to be told per the participants of the study. Participant F shared, “Yeah, the probably the first day. It's probably the most stressful day on the first day we have.” Participant I stated, “Hands down, it's that first day again. I mean, you're combining the loss of control cause you know, at least 50% of the participants have been mandated to be there, the unknowing.” Participant H presented, “The first day I think when they first walk in that door and I think just coming in there that first day is the by far the most stressful part of it.”

The participants shared that the required story time created significant stress responses of the law enforcement officers. It was from that point that the catalyst was created for the process that had hoped to improve the quality of life and some resemblance of the previous person that was prior to the event.

D Response:

I've seen people that when they're telling their story when they get to a certain part, it's like all sudden they start shaking or their legs start. You know, you can tell like an emotional part of the story where they're they physically can't sit still. Have had them where they just completely just in the middle of the story, just in the middle of the sentence, just stopped and had to put their head down to, like, gather the courage to keep talking.

F Response

They may cry. They may breakdown tears, which for a cop is a hard thing to do, so now they feel even more embarrassed about that you know, because cops are we don't cry, right? So we don't show emotions.

B Response:

Some of them leave the room and that's when we followed them to make sure they're OK or they might not even be talking yet. And somebody across the room says something that triggers them and they'll walk out the room and some of them will try to leave.

C Response:

There were some personal stuff as well that were that was causing him to have that emotional response. But you know, typically if people get up and leave the room, we have a peer go with them. I actually went out because he's not only someone that I worked with then occasionally we do have someone leave the room because they get overwhelmed.

Journey Towards Well-Being

After the emotional and physical first day, the participants explained the process that was required to move the law enforcement officers to the next step in the process. The coding

process identified four interview questions that provided the foundation of this theme, and those interview questions were 11, 12, 16, and 19. Once the coding process was completed, and the theme was apparent, the definition was created for the theme. The definition that this researcher created was the process that was required to have completed the journey. The process involved two areas which were the small groups that were led by the peer team members and licensed counselors that performed Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) on participants that had met the criteria. The law enforcement officers are offered EMDR during the small groups, which was a main focal point of the participants of the study due to the level of influence that it exerted in the SC PCIS process.

The first aspect that was presented by the participants for the success of the small groups was the design of it. If it was not for the design and set up, the influence would have been reduced.

Participant C shared,

And the small group, you know, it just fosters a more intimate sort of environment where you're not in that big room where you're separated, you know by, you know, maybe 40 or 50 feet and there's 60 other people in the room instead, you're in a room with about eight or 10 people.

Participant D presented,

OK, it's it's more intimate. That's where we all get to really know each other and the peer group, the small groups so on the first day we have a few people because no ones allowed to write anything down except familiar, maybe like two or three people and those two or three people get together with a mental health person and we formulate the small groups

Participant I stated,

Uh, it's comfort one. It's the smaller group. And again, you're in there with other cops and you know, on that first day you find out there's mental health clinicians or and psychiatrists, psychologists in the room. And like that just makes people nervous. It general, much less cops.

The setting for the groups created the environment needed for the peer team members, so the law enforcement officers could share their individual stories among those that had similar ones. It was a key factor that the peer team members that led the small groups had the foundational background that allowed for the bond to be created among the entire group. Participant A shared, "You got people from a likeminded scenario type environment. And it just they help each other out."

Participant B stated,

Because the peer members have been where they were, they've had incidents. That's why we have the peer members there because they have had the symptoms they've had problems just like they have and they know we know. We know that you know what? It's just when they walk in that door But we know at the end of the three days, it's gonna bring them some type of help, and it's gonna change their life where they don't know.

Participant F presented,

Uh. And when they hear that from peers and stuff, he has a lot of validity to the things we're trying to help them understand and they feel an affinity for these people because they're just like them. They're cops. It's much different than what we, as therapists do. Even though I'm a former law enforcement officer. It's much different because I come from a different place, even though I've had some experiences. But when you're working with other cops, their peers who are out there in the trenches and doing the same thing.

In all that was presented on the design of the small groups, participant H shared the belief based on the vast experience that had been acquired by the participant. It spoke volumes about the design.

Participant H shared,

I think you know the peers the peer session is in my opinion and I'm not a research person or educated on it, but from my experience that I've seen over 22 years. The peer model is so effective because you're going in there with people who know your job, who are cops also.

The participants further explained that the key attribute of the small groups was the peer team members. The needed benefits would not have been experienced by the law enforcement officers that were involved in the SC PCIS if the peers were not there. It was the interaction with the peer team members in the small groups that contained vast power.

Participant K shared, "But the peer connection is vital to a PCIS."

Participant B stated,

But we know that because of the all the impacts and all the ones that we've done. So it did peer members are really a big influence on the program because I don't think we would have the people come there if we didn't have the peers.

Participant E presented,

Yeah, because your peers, because they've been there and they've done it. Uh, you know there's nothing more appealing, more impactful to an officer when another officer says, hey, do let me tell you what happened to me.

The journey was not just created by the peer team members but also by licensed counselors that had been present to perform EMDR on the law enforcement officers that met the

mental health criteria. It was affectionately referred to as Voodoo by many of the participants of the study, but regardless of the terminology, it proved to me another valuable tool needed to move the law enforcement officer to a better place emotionally and physically.

Participant C presented,

Takes it doesn't erase the memory, it doesn't change the memory, but it sort of puts the memory in its proper place. It takes it like from being right here in their in front of their face to kind of just behind their head and it sort of puts it in the past where it belongs and it helps separate the incident from the negative emotions that come up. It's where they can think about the incident. They can talk about the incident. They remember the incident, but that negative emotional impact is removed.

Participant D stated,

It's just I don't know how to explain it, it's just really I don't know what it does I know what it's supposed to do, but I don't understand it, but it just that's the reason why we all call it voodoo. Because we don't understand it, but it works.

Participant E shared,

All we ever hear them say is they'll point to the clinician that give them to them, they said. You're my new hero a lot of people call it voodoo because there's. I don't know what you did with you waving your fingers in front of my eyes, but you know.

The participants were able to see a change in the law enforcement officers that underwent EMDR, and it was through these visible changes that participants gained support that EMDR was as crucial to the completed process. The reduced stress from the changed law enforcement officer allowed for a better return on the completed small group sessions and the SC PCIS as a

whole. Participant E shared, “I was able to, like I said, was able to sleep last night. Uh, I thought about it, but it didn't bother me near as much.”

Participant A stated,

So it's again, I go to my personal experience, but I can relate because I've seen it in other people. I've done the EMDR three times and it was positive for me twice.

I already had a new outlook on my events, but this was the game changer where I was able to take what was slapping me in the face and kind of move it to the side of the head.

Participant C shared,

That a lot of people when it especially, you know if they've had a severe reaction, they go, they go out of the room for EMDR and they come back and they their whole countenance has changed. You know, I've heard it described as, as you know, people feel like the weight of the world has been lifted off of them. Umm, you know? They come back, they come back to the room and they just have this incredible smile on their face. Not everybody, but a lot of times it works. So it's so effective and it works. You know, it just there's just a complete change.

Participant D provided,

Is just especially like right then. It's like you can see like, it's like a load been lifted off their shoulders. I mean, it's just an immediate just Wow. But the next day, I mean, they were like, I slept all night. I was able to think about the what happened and not shatter or do this or have this reaction.

It was the responses that were provided by the participants that required a follow-up question to be presented during the interviews. This was based on the fact that not every law enforcement officer would do EMDR either by choice or not clinically appropriate. Therefore, it

was posed to the participants if the lack of EMDR reduced the quality of the SC PCIS experience. Participant K stated, “Absolutely not. I think everybody gets out of it what they put into it and whether they, whether they do the EMDR or EMDR or not. I think it's still beneficial that they're there and they participate.

Participant G provided,

I can't say that they would find the same benefit, but I think whether EMDR works or not don't think there's anybody who comes through PCIS that doesn't find a benefit. Like I said, I can't say that it's the same. I wouldn't go so far as to say it's the same, but is it of equal value? I would say, yeah.

The interview question that was designed to measure the impact of the SC PCIS as the participants completed the process revealed interesting information. The journey required that the law enforcement officers that had participated glean some form of alteration to the previous stress levels or maladaptive activities. The participants provided feedback that grounded their interpretations of effective impacts.

Participant C shared,

Umm yes, I see a biggest change and with the small groups because I guess it's more intimate and we get to know each other a little bit more and you see the little bit of change throughout the time that you're together.

Participant B presented,

It's like again, it's like after talking about it and seeing a clinician or counselor and just talking sometimes just talking to the with the peers and stuff and everything, talking with other participants, they are again, now you don't see that isolation now, they're coming

together and they're talking at lunch. They're sitting together and they're sitting not only with the people that came with, they sitting with other people that they don't even know. In all the participants' responses that were provided, one had come to light during the coding process that showed the impact beyond just the walls of the SC PCIS.

Participant G shared,

Umm yes, there he is so one of the most impactful ones for me. Umm, a guy had had discussed in the big room how he and his kids used to do Legos. They used to build very elaborate Lego structures and figurines and the noun you know, even the sight of Legos frustrated him, and he had less patience and things of that nature and then after the PCIS or after EMDR, you know, he came back into the room. And I remember asking him, you know, how do you feel? He said, I'm ready to go home and get out the Legos.

Well-Being is on the Horizon

The entire SC PCIS process will have occurred over a three-day period, and the participants of the study were expected to evaluate if it was possible for an impact on the law enforcement officer to be observed. After the coding was completed, the last theme was identified and it was based on those previous aspects. The definition of the theme created by this researcher was the participants of the SC PCIS made an observed and measured movement that showed well-being could be obtained. The theme was created from interview questions 10, 13, 15, and 18.

One of the first noticed changes after the completion of the first two days of the SC PCIS process that was discussed by two of the participants was the ability of the law enforcement officer to have slept with a different result. Participant K shared, "that was the first night that he had slept in 165 days."

Participant E stated,

You have people tell you I slept for the first time last night in six months. You know, I slept all night. I don't know what that is, but this first night I've slept. You know, I have a good meal. I laid down. I was actually tired. My body finally relaxed and I slept. But yeah, you can. It's almost like 180 degree turn for 99.9% of about the time.

The participants provided that the observed changes for the law enforcement officers could be validated by their observed behaviors or attitudes. Participant J presented, "Almost night and day, some of the transformations in the three days is phenomenal. You can see them there much more relaxed than talking about it."

Participant A shared,

Knowledge is power so as they start learning why things are happening why they felt this way or why they did this by the end of the third day. It's a different game-changer. I mean, they'll come, they'll come in and when they go around the room and they are allowed to say what they need to say before we close the day out and close the PCIS. They're saying thank you is the most common thing. I found a new me. I appreciate you. And I mean it's just. Why didn't we know about this sooner? I mean, those are the most common results. So, but it is very, very obvious.

Participant C stated,

It is the change from Monday to Wednesday I you know I always call it I'm you know always say I'm working for Wednesday because that first thing Monday morning to the time. People leave on Wednesday afternoon the transformation is generally pretty significant.

The participants of the study continued with information that provided a foundation that there was positive change observed in the law enforcement officer into day three and, more importantly, beyond the completion of the SC PCIS. The attitudes of the law enforcement officers were the opposite of day one. Instead of isolation, feelings of stress, and the fear of the event, a new outlook was apparent. Participant G shared, “Yeah, I would definitely say so. I mean, they, they're smiling. They're joking.” Participant J presented, “Ohh yes, that they'll tell you. They'll tell you. Put the smile in their whole lot more relaxed. They're hugging each other.”

Participant K shared,

I would say yes. A lot of people at the end of the PCIS say that they're really glad that they came and it was nice to know that they were surrounded by other officers who had had the same type of incident.

The participants discussed during the interviews that there was a creation of a new family by the end of day three. The law enforcement officers knew that the journey was one that would not have to be taken alone and that the SC PCIS team would always be there for them. Just as important was the bond created among the law enforcement officers that attended.

Participant C stated,

Well, after the PCIS is over, usually the people who've been in small groups together are, you know, kind of saying goodbye. They're, you know, shaking hands or hugging or exchanging phone numbers. You know that they built that sense of community and a lot of times, maybe a participant will identify with a particular peer and they're, you know, sort of saying goodbye.

Participant D presented,

People have formed friendships because they've realized that they're not alone, and they have that connection with each other. They've made during small groups and it's more relaxed and it's they realize what? All. There is nothing to be scared of when they come in there that we're not making them.

Participant G shared,

There's a bond between some of them that didn't know each other the first day, and you can feel that, or you're aware that they've made connections. You know, they're people are interacting and they feel better about themselves and they feel better about reaching out to others.

While the participants of the study would have limited access to law enforcement officers after the completion of the SC PCIS unless bonds were shared, it was noted during the interviews and completed coding that there was a long-term attribute displayed. Participant B stated, "So their well-being afterward, too. I mean, not just days after months and even years afterward, they're still in good, pretty in good shape."

Participant F stated,

Uh, yes. After it, uh, many of them will ask. that got so much out of that. How can I give back? I'd like to participate. I liked to be one of the peers. How do I get into the peer program? Many of them go back and they talked to their bosses and stuff and their bosses looking say wow, you know, you've really changed. They find that they're more aware, less sullen. But the biggest is, I think is so many of them come back as they weren't come back as peers. They wanna give back what they got and they will come and help others like they were helped. So I think that's where the biggest thing is

Participant G presented,

Some people, even as soon as the end of the PCIS are ready to give back by becoming peer team member themselves, and for some of them that doesn't happen for a little while after they get back, but they're they have found so much help and in going through the process that they want to be part of that for someone else.

The cycle of peers appeared to be explained, and the needed benefits of well-being long-term. However, there was one remaining aspect that required further explanation by the participants. That would have pertained to the reasons why a law enforcement officer would attend more than one SC PCIS if it were so effective. The three areas that appeared after coding was the person failed to address the issues or never faced them and the realization that the spouse or significant other should have attended.

Participant G proposed,

Sometimes it's because or I it seems to be because they've touched on it. Issue that brought up maybe another issue and maybe they wanna come back and and talk about that other issues that they maybe didn't realize had an impact in their lives before.

Participant B shared,

One reason is they realized that they didn't pay attention and we've had some that had said that they didn't get anything out of the first one because they didn't really pay attention. They didn't want to be there. So that's one reason why they came back because.

Participant D stated,

They needed to come and they were told you need to go to this for this reason and so they came. But they weren't honest with themselves about what was really bothering them, and it might have been something that happened years before.

The lack of the spouse or significant other not invited by the law enforcement officer showed the last need to return to another SC PCIS.

Participant A shared,

My problem was in my house. My problem was not my incident. My problems with how I was dealing with it and it was how I was dealing with my spouse and like I said, you had Eric Skidmore dug that, recognized it. And said you two were going, I'm getting your police chief and your sheriff to make you go. So we go to PCIS and 180. I mean, it was a 180 on my life on my marriage on everything.

Participant B presented,

And I've heard participants who came back for the second time say that another reason is they wanna bring this significant other they wanna bring their wife they wanna bring their husband they wanna bring that significant other to back to help to show them what helped them and then to also to help them and also another reason is.

Overview of Themes RQ 2

The next step that was completed in the collection of data for the study focused on the remaining five interview questions. The participants of the study are impacted in varying ways, and the questions were intended to develop materials to be coded for theme development. The end result of the coding process revealed patterns within the data sets that formed three themes. The first theme involved interview questions 20 and 21 which created the theme of serving restores well-being. The second theme acquired from the completed coding was understanding the relationships that came from interview questions 22 and 23. Interview question number 24 provided the data for coding the last theme, known as making it work. The completed coding process revealed data saturation based on the participants' provided answers from the interviews.

Serving Restores Well-Being

The majority of the peer team members have been involved in a critical stress or traumatic event that resulted in the needed attendance to the SC PCIS process. As previous stated under the theme of well-being on the horizon, those law enforcement officers that completed the SC PCIS wanted to return to the program to be peer team members for the various reasons that were provided. Regardless of the direction that had taken the participant to serve as a peer team member, there should have been some form of impact on their lives, and this themed examined that impact. The definition for the theme created by this researcher was provided an understanding of those that served as peer team members restored their well-being.

The first set of impacts noted from the interviews ranged from the ability to pay it forward and the enjoyment that is obtained from the process that has been performed during the PCIS. Participant B shared, "You know, it helps me feel that I'm OK too. That and it gives me that benefit to see that them get better. It just helps me to be able to help people."

Participant A stated,

Overall, you know that that whole pay it forward thing has been my I mean I've always had that driving mentality but. The peer team member. Right on my personal life probably is more therapeutic than anything Ohh. I feel like some of me helping others is a way to still help me with my events. I know. Hear that from other people, if you haven't already heard it.

Participant H presented,

I've been through my own critical incident and that's kind of what I used my experiences.

I tried to use my experiences for something positive. And that's all I did. It was through

PCIS. So it gave me a certainly a sense of purpose and a place to put what I've been through and use it for something positive instead of just feeling terrible about.

The ability to have had the opportunity to have served as a peer team member allowed those participants in the study to have shared a part of themselves. They knew that by day three that, the law enforcement officers that had participated would have been altered in a positive manner. Participant B shared, "So and again now like I said before, it's when they walk in the door. They know I know something they don't know. I know they are gonna get help.

Participant F presented,

That I you know, I feel fulfilled. I feel good that I can help some one that maybe someone who's carried a load around for a long time that they get relief from that thing, something that has defined him in a negative way and for me, if I can be a little part of that and help them.

Participant G stated,

Knowing that I see closure I see families kinda put back together. I see tensions eased. I see anxiety reduced. It helps me in those ways because I know that it has an impact on the people who come.

The participants shared in the interview process that had served as a peer team member and assisted with the level of a negative impact the critical event had on the person. The ability to have a had constant ability to have accessed the program, and its varied members improved their well-being. It was not just important to have altered the initial event's influence but also the extended impact. This researcher wondered how the peer team member would have responded to repeated exposure to a critical event or traumatic event stories. Participant D shared, "I think because I'm a peer member, I knew what to do, and so I've been able to handle

my stressors easier than most people do. Participant D stated, “It puts it in perspective. It it's helps a lot, and you know, lets me know that I wasn't going crazy at the time it went on the way I cope was beneficial for me.” Participant F responded, “Yeah, my critical incidents really don't create a problem for me so much anymore. I'd say they're healed.” A powerful response that participant C provided served to finalize the benefit of having served as a peer team member.

Participant C stated,

My personal relationships. Being on the peer team, it really helped my marriage because after my incident. I didn't, you know, the only thing I never told my wife what happened. The only thing she knew about my incident was what happened on the news. And because I thought I was protecting her from that, you know, and meanwhile my whole demeanor at home had changed. You know it I was closed off from her. You know she will tell you I was a different person. You know, the guy that left the house March 2nd of 2000. And the guy that came home that same day were two completely different people.

The participants of the study displayed impact on their lives in a positive manner, consistently having served as a peer team member, except for one. Participant I shared that the required service of a peer team member overwhelmed the participant to the point that required the participant to take a short sabbatical from the peer team, and the negative impact was from there not being any other peer team members in the participant's area. The participant has since returned to the SC PCIS peer team, but it needed to be noted that it was possible to have a negative impact regardless of its short duration.

I had to take a break. I was starting to get worn down and being in the upstate.

There was really no big peer teams in the upstate and then just with all the stuff that goes on our peer team kind of grew pretty quickly and at the time I was over it. You know, so

it did wear me out, so I took a major step back from it. And I just recently got back into our peer team.

Understand the Relationship

The second theme that was created after the completion of coding was how the peer team member viewed the importance of relationships. The process that the participants of the study underwent to become peer team members is a difficult one that required self-examination but required the development of a strong foundation in relationships. This researcher defined the theme based on the code results, and that definition was the process that gained the required information to correlate the importance of relationships. This researcher believed it was vital to have determined the impact on the personal and professional relationships of the participants, having served as a peer team member. The coding involved interview questions 22 and 23.

The interview questions measured the impact of the participants' personal relationships, and these could have been on the job or outside of the work environment. Participant H shared, "Well, me personally, I mean its its been a life changer." Participant K stated, "So, I think that has a huge impact on my personal relationship with my spouse."

Participant B shared,

It has helped me better understand, I think myself at better help me understand people and it helps me be able to communicate better too, because I know I need to communicate so that being a peer team members has help me do that before you know I wouldn't communicate, but I know it was really important to do it.

Participant E responded,

Very shortly, my wife tells me every tells me. Now, sometimes you're just too brutally honest. I said. Well, don't ask the question if you don't want to know the answer, and I

think you've known me and my reputation. If you wanna know what answer you ask a question I'm gonna take so. That's, I don't know. I don't how they answered that one.

Participant F stated,

Uh, well. Uh, it's great to enhance them. My wife frequently goes with me too these and she's a nurse and she goes with me and enjoys helping get people moved around and doing whatever she can do. You know there to help the process and that something be more open with her and she more open with me and more realistic about being honest and direct, when something's bothering us, you know we've learned to talk about it and not let it sit there and mold and mildew until it becomes a problem.

The participants provided data from the interviews that held information that pertained to the impact on work relationships. The ability to have a positive impact on the varying relationships was shown by the participants' responses. Interestingly, these relationships improved work friendships, community relationships, and leadership skills.

Participant B responded,

It helped me be a better supervisor. It helped me be a better supervisor with the men and women that I've had because. You know, sometimes you have a officer or they'll come in and they are not doing their work. And now when you bring them in there, I know it's not. Might not be. It's not because they're lazy, it's because they got something going on in life. They had a critical incident, they got something going on at home, so it made me be a better supervisor.

Participant G stated,

It's also made me. Umm, more compassionate was with the officers and those involved in the criminal justice system that I deal with on a regular basis, not only being aware of things they deal with in terms of critical incidents, but also family stressors.

Participant H shared,

Certainly helped me be able to talk with people who have been involved in even things that aren't on the job. With people who've been involved in very tragic incidents and understand what they're going through but you know it's, you know, been doing it so long now. I think it's definitely been a huge positive impact.

Making it Work

The last theme that was created from the interviews with the participants of the study was the perceived reasons that the SC PCIS programs worked based on the participants' individual experiences. The first aspect of the theme was that the SC PCIS process consistently deployed a diverse group of people whom all wanted to help those in need. It was this diversity that served as one foundation for why the SC PCIS worked as perceived by the participants. Participant B shared, "I feel it works because of the partnerships that we have, the peers, the clinician, the some of the chaplains that we have, it's not one-sided Clinicians here, peers here is a combination of all of us working together."

Participant A stated,

Of the wide variety of experience that comes in there just to pull the love on people. And make sure that they just walk out of there better. There's no other way to describe it than that it. So it why does PCIS work? And there's no way to describe why it works. It's just it's the love and the care and the. The design of it. And so it's just, it's phenomenal.

Participant E responded,

Because you have good people in there, you have good people that care about people.

They put their heart and soul into it, and I'm gonna, I'll say this. I think the people that are running it and of course this comes through the Church, good Christian people that care about people and they care about them. They care about their brother more they do themselves.

Participant K shared,

I think the PCIS works for several different reasons. Who is the say all be all Eric, and then you have mental health professionals who are familiar with first responders. The clinical director is a retired Secret Service agent, so he understands, you know, first responders and everything that they go through. And then the peers, the peers are vital because you've got peers from not only this state but all these other States, 13 other states that communicate with each other and can piggyback or bounce off of each other. Ideas if they have somebody struggling in their state.

The second aspect of the theme that presented itself after coding was the way that the SC PCIS affected those that encountered the process. It affected all aspects of the life of anyone that had the benefit of an encounter with a team of this makeup. Participant H shared, "In my opinion, the biggest reason the PCIS is works is it's a peer driven program so it's not only do you have peers who are just law enforcement officers or even spouses."

Participant D stated,

The main thing is the PCIS. What I love about it and the way I describe it, it helps someone mind, body and soul. We've got the mental health people there, your peer members there to talk about stuff. We've got masseuses there to help with as Carly used

to say, the tensions in the tissues. And so it makes people realize that it helped. It affects you not only mentally, but physically as well. And then we've got our chaplains there to help with any religious questions that you may have. And it's just all-encompassing. And so we have good food, we got good fellowship and it's just we try to cover every aspect to help people

Participant F shared,

The most important aspect of the PCIS is the peers other law enforcement people. Other people having had similar or the same experiences who share what they went through and how it changed for them and how they've changed and what it's like today and seeing that and opening them up. That's that's what makes it work.

Participant K responded,

But it it's all I think it's all about. How these folks keep coming back and they care about the person and their families, it's not just about the officers, about their family, it's about dispatchers. Everybody's included, so I think that's I think that's those are the biggest reasons why I think PCIS works.

The continued problem of burnout, compassion fatigue, or other stress-related issues had led to some of the trends for law enforcement officers that have departed from the profession, and the unfortunate ultimate departure, suicide. The participants provided information on the fact that the SC PCIS process allowed people to have remained in the profession. Participant A shared, "There's no telling how many lives you save."

Participant C reported,

I think another thing that is that the PCIS does. It helps you see that there is life after the incident. There is Umm, you know, people go on to get have you know Uh, great careers

after their incident, you know Uh and I think another thing that really helps people is they don't feel alone anymore.

Participant D shared,

You know, they have a they, they are still moving. They're still going. They made it to retirement. You know, I wanna make it to retirement and I think that's the just the partnership with everybody together. It works and then too. They have to be. They have to be the ones too. That that gives it a chance. They have to be the ones that wanna the buy in and I think we get that buy in from them and it helped.

Lastly, during the interview on question 24, participant H provided an interesting statement that was flagged to be used in the presentation of the research because it provided a direct thought on why the SC PCIS was so impactful.

Participant H stated,

I mean it's I think it you know it speaks for itself. It's a when I went through PCIS and 2001, I think there was about 15 to 20 participants, if it was held once a year just in South Carolina. And now I think it's in 13 states, it's in South Carolina four times a year and Close to 50 participants per PCIS, so I mean the effectiveness of it. That's speaks for the effectiveness of it really does. If it wasn't effective, it wouldn't have grown like that.

Research Question Responses

Research question one was: What is the impact of the completed South Carolina Post Critical Incident Seminar (PCIS) on the well-being of the law enforcement officer participants as perceived by the PCIS Peer Team Members? The completed interviews that were performed with the 11 peer team members from the SC PCIS served as foundational support that a majority

of law enforcement officers that had participated and completed the SC PCIS process have had a positive impact on the levels of well-being.

The two themes, harmful incidents to participants and trying to cope with the incident, created from the completed research process addressed what caused issues of maladaptive or negative stress coping skills that were deployed and how those responses prohibited a return to a pre-event level of well-being or to at least an accepted level. The most harmful events that were discussed by the participants of the study were any event that involved children, an officer injured or killed in the line of duty, and the suicide of someone. The most presented coping action that law enforcement officers used was alcohol, and every participant in the studied presented the same response that concerned the use of alcohol.

The remaining three themes for the research question examined the process that was required to break the cycle of unaccepted stress responses by the law enforcement officer and would that deviation had created a path toward well-being. The information that was provided from the completed coding process showed that the stress of the first day had the greatest impact on the law enforcement officers, but it also served as an example that every person at the SC PCIS had been impacted by a similar or comparable event based on its perception. It was that first day that began to break the barriers and served as a catalyst toward well-being. The participants were firm in that the peer-driven aspect of the SC PCIS process was the root of most of the success, but the process was not just one area. It also included the licensed counselors that provided EMDR, which proved to be a major point of influence on the law enforcement officer that allowed for the journey towards well-being to have happened. It was the totality of the SC PCIS process and all the parties involved that created the ability for well-being to be on the horizon. The area that the participants presented that was discovered from coding was that once

the SC PCIS was completed, many law enforcement officers presented the desire to be allowed to join the SC PCIS as a peer team members. That in itself showed that well-being was achieved for the majority of the participants of the SC PCIS.

Research question two did not have as many interview questions because the questions were directed to the impact on the peer team member: How has the PCIS process impacted you as a peer team member? The completed coding of the interviews with the participants on the five interview questions related to the impact resulted in clear groups that allowed for the three themes to be created. The first theme, serving restores well-being, determined that those that had served as peer team members wanted to pay it forward and showed happiness and satisfaction that the law enforcement officer would no longer suffer as they had on day one. The participants showed that there were skills gained that assisted in future aspects of the crucial stress event that was experienced by the peer team member and provided tools that allowed the peer team members to have returned to an accepted level of well-being.

The second theme was dedicated to the relationships that the participants had formed as peer team members. The relationships formed were both personal and professional and addressed the spillover effect that some had experienced from the initial critical stress event. It was by these relationships that allowed the peer team members to have had the ability to gain support at a moment's notice if needed. The last interview question pertained to the last theme of why the SC PCIS process worked, and the participants shared many of the same beliefs. Those were that if the program had not been peer-driven, it would not have been as impactful. However, it was not just the peers that had made the program effective, but rather the totality of the group that had been created when the program was incepted. The success was the licensed

counselors, chaplains or other clergies, the massage therapists, and those that had taken the time to cook the meals.

Summary

The researcher for this study performed 11 interviews with the requested 20 participants that obtained a completion rate of 55%. The participants of the completed interviews were peer team members that had served in the South Carolina Post Critical Incident Seminar (SC PCIS) as peer team members for at least ten years and had completed at least 15 SC PCIS events. Based on the completed interview responses to 19 interview questions that were related to those of law enforcement officers that participated in the SC PCIS process, the completed coding created five themes that were evaluated that determined that the completed SC PCIS did have an impact on the well-being of those that had completed the process. The remaining five interview questions were related to the impact of having served as a peer team member for SC PCIS. From the coded information, three cohesive themes were deducted that showed that those that had served as peer team members had a positive impact on their well-being. The last theme that concerned the peer team member showed that it had been the totality of the design and people in the SC PICS that had made it effective.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Overview

The study that has been completed examined the relationship between the South Carolina Post Critical Incident Seminar (SC PCIS) and the impact on the well-being of the participants that have completed the process. The qualitative study examined if the impact of the SC PCIS process provided an outcome that allowed the participants to be returned to a level of well-being that allowed for an improved quality of life. Additionally, the study examined the impact on the peer team members that served within the SC PCIS. The chapter examined the summary of the findings of the study as it related to the impact of the SC PCIS on the participants of the process and those peer team members that serve within the program. A discussion on the findings will be conducted that provides the themes that were created from the completed coding process and the relationship of the themes to the research questions. An examination of the relationship between the theoretical literature materials and the findings of the study will be performed that will transition over to the implications of the study. Once the previous information is presented, the delimitations and limitations of the study and future recommendations for areas of study will be presented.

Summary of Findings

The findings of the study were aligned at the completion of the coding process, and the responses to the interview questions displayed similar answers that allowed for the data to be determined to have reached saturation. The themes that were created from the process were utilized to address the research questions that were created for the study.

Research Question 1

Research question one examined what the impact of the completed SC PCIS would be on the well-being of the law enforcement officers that had participated and completed the three-day program. The findings created five themes that were utilized to address and answer the research question. Regardless of the critical event or traumatic stress event that had the law enforcement officer in attendance, the completed program did provide a pathway to return to a level of well-being that was near or equal to pre-event levels. The process also showed that it would have a positive impact on other aspects of the law enforcement officers' lives, such as improved communications skills, empathy, and improved family or partner relationships. The participants of the study discussed that many law enforcement officers that have completed the SC PCIS wanted to return to the program to serve as peer team members. Based on this information and the responses from the impact of the SC PCIS peer team members, this can create long-term therapeutic care because of the constant levels of support and access to the program, which includes licensed mental health professionals. The participants of the study presented that it was not just one aspect of the SC PCIS process that worked but rather the totality of the program including the people that are there to provide the service. It was described as a total mind and body program.

Research question two was related to the impact of the SC PCIS process on the peer team members. Many of the peer team members agreed that having served as a peer team member provided context to the critical stress or traumatic stress event to the point that allowed the members to freely discuss the event without having a negative impact. The service as a peer team member allowed them to give back to a program that improved the quality of the members' lives and served a selfish aspect of allowing the peer team members to see the changes in law enforcement officers' lives that come to the SC PCIS. The service allowed for the acquisition of

skills that allowed for future deployment and intervention in future critical stress or traumatic stress events. This was further improved because of the networking that is gained from the service which allowed for rapid access to other peer team members and licensed counselors. The last interview question posed to the participants of the study was why the SC PCIS worked, and it was because of the peer-driven program that was designed around bringing all aspects into the process to heal the person from chaplains, clergy, and licensed counselors. It was the entire program, day by day and hour by hour, that created the greatest impact.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was twofold in that it examined the impact of the SC PCIS process on the law enforcement officer that attended the three-day program and the impact on the peer team members that are the foundation of the program that led the small groups as well as serve as mentors to the attendees. The results gathered from the 11 completed interviews encompassed 19 interview questions that pertained to research question 1 and five interview questions that were related to the peer team members for research question 2. The completed coding process developed five themes for research question 1 and three themes for research question 2.

Research Question 1

Research question 1 (RQ1) asked: what is the impact of the completed South Carolina Post Critical Incident Seminar (PCIS) on the well-being of the law enforcement officer participants as perceived by the PCIS Peer Team Members?

RQ 1: Theme 1 - Harmful Incidents to Participants

The first theme was related to the actual types of critical stress or traumatic stress events that created disruption in the lives of law enforcement officers. Not surprising was that the

majority of the law enforcement officers were influenced by an on-the-job event, but there was an indication that off-duty incidents that related to personal matters were also able to create a stressful environment that the law enforcement officer was not able to adequately or successfully engage appropriate coping skills. The data collected showed that the most influential stress event would be an incident that related to a child or children. The stress of the event would be further compounded based on the frequency and duration of the exposure. The findings from the study supported the literature that the frequency, certainty, and severity of the traumatic stress event create an increased stress response that could rapidly and easily overwhelm the traditional coping skills that the law enforcement officer had acquired (Bryant-Davis et al., 2017; Collazo, 2020; Jarero et al., 2019; Lewis-Schroeder et al., 2018). Additionally, if the law enforcement officer had a child or children of similar age, the negative impact was amplified because of the causation of the event and seeing the officer's child in that event. Violanti et al. (2018) presented the five frequently observed stressors, and incidents that involved battering of a child had the highest stressor known. Therefore, the findings from the study are supported by the literature and align with previously known information.

The next harmful event that had a negative impact was an officer that was injured or killed in the line of duty. The negative impact could still be influential on a law enforcement officer even if that officer were not on the scene of the event. Violanti et al. (2016) and Violanti et al. (2018) performed research that showed that the loss of life or injury to a fellow officer is one of the most influential stress events that can occur. Under the general strain theory and its relationship with traumatic or violent events, El Sayed et al. (2019) explained that the environment in which law enforcement officers operate is one of unpredictability and violence. The last harmful event was the suicide of someone known to the law enforcement officer.

Participants in the study discussed that suicide was the issue and that it did not have to related to work or the critical stress or traumatic event. The suicide could have been committed someone who was known to or related to the law enforcement officer that has now adversely affected the levels of the stress response. In research by Roberts (2021), suicide is the 10th leading causation of early death, and the duration and frequency of exposure to traumatic stress contribute to the unfortunate event to occur. The SC PCIS process addresses suicide and provides educational materials and screening to identify those in the program that may be at risk. Intervention is swift and certain if a participant in the program is contemplating suicide.

The SC PCIS program has been shown to provide critical intervention in the area of stress response that has been created by the events related to these events and the others that the law enforcement officers were experiencing prior to the completion of the SC PCIS. The rapid implementation of the program can reduce or eliminate the maladaptive stress response, but more importantly, the study has shown that the program does return the law enforcement officer to a balanced form of well-being which allows for the improvement in the quality of life for the law enforcement officer and those in contact with that person. This is vital in that the reduction of harmful stress levels can allow law enforcement officers to return to duty and normal functions related to their careers. The foundation has been placed with the tools to identify if they may need further intervention. The ability to remove the general strain associated with law enforcement is not possible, but the ability to have an intervention program that can address when it overloads the law enforcement officer is paramount. The program has proven to be effective in the intervention of the general strain theory that has been created from a critical stress or traumatic stress event, so the foundation of the program does not need to change.

Moving forward, greater access to the program based on the recommendation in this study would allow for the continued intervention, both short and long-term for the participants.

RQ 1: Theme 2 – Trying to Cope with the Incident

There was one main coping skill that was presented by all peer team members that were interviewed, and that was alcohol. It was interesting to discover that one of the reasons that alcohol was chosen was that it was socially acceptable to drink alcohol in public and private. There was discussion during the interviews that there was minor abuse of legally prescribed drugs, but by far, alcohol was paramount. The increased use of alcohol observed by the peer team members supports the findings by Doyle et al. (2021) that shows a traumatic stress event increases the use of alcohol and other substances to gain control of the adverse reaction. The information that was gained from the study supported the literature that was reviewed pertaining to the increased use of alcohol to cope with the increased levels of stress that were being experienced. The use of alcohol inhibits the law enforcement officer's ability to process the event fully and further leads to depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues. The literature further showed that this would create a spiral effect that increases over time without intervention (Bishopp et al., 2020; Chopko et al., 2018; Doyle et al., 2021; MacEachern, 2018).

While there were other coping strategies that did align with the study, there was one that did not. In the literature review of stress responses under the strain of service within the violence and uncertainty of the profession, there can be an increase in domestic or interpersonal relationship violence. This type of violence may appear or be increased because of a critical stress event leading to the law enforcement officer having the feeling of being unable to control even the private aspects of their lives, so violence spills over into the personal life (El Sayed et al., 2020; Gracia et al., 2010; Zavala & Melander, 2019). From the collected data from the

study, there was no mention or discussion on the topics of this form of violence. The main item that was used by the law enforcement officer as it pertained to spouses or significant others was the avoidance of the discussion of the critical stress or traumatic stress event amongst each other. The fact that law enforcement officers preferred to attempt to isolate the event from entering the private lives. Ironically, by refusing to share the information, the law enforcement officer did allow it to spillover into their personal life. The isolation increased the unhealthy stress response for all parties in the home.

The influence of alcohol has been shown to adversely affect the ability of the law enforcement officer to return to well-being, and the SC PCIS program has identified that this stress response continues to be the most frequent method of inappropriate stress response. The SC PCIS program has put into place peer team members that allow for this topic to be confronted and allows for proper intervention. Law enforcement officers are by nature hesitant to admit that there are problems within their lives; however, the SC PCIS has included peer team members that have battled the same issues. This allows for a continuity of trust to be created that allows for proper intervention. Based on the information from the study, this information needs to be shared with the department heads of the agencies within the state so that the supervisors are aware of this trend. While the simplest method would be to send an email or letters to the agency, it is recommended that training videos be created to allow for the SCLEAP program to disseminate the information to the required parties or to have peer team members in the areas to share the information. The advantage of using the peer team members is any follow-up questions can be immediately addressed. Additionally, the information could be presented at the various state functions that occur yearly in the state, such as the police chiefs' conference, the sheriffs' association conference, the South Carolina Law Enforcement Officer Association

conference, and the South Carolina Training Officers' conference. The information could further be shared within the mid-level and executive leadership programs that are provided by the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy. While many agencies use an employee early warning system, employee early warning systems may not detect the change, but those close to the officer, such as peers, supervisors, and family members may. This would allow for faster intervention due to the additional information that has been shared in these conferences or training events. Without proper intervention, the law enforcement officer may not appropriately respond to the rigors of the profession, thus creating complaints, inappropriate use of force, or other negative adaptation of job performance, placing the officer and agency in liability.

The aspect of domestic violence or interpersonal violence not becoming an issue from the critical stress or traumatic event was interesting, but the matter that must be addressed is the lack of a partner not attending the SC PCIS program. This needs to be addressed by the program directors because it has been shown by the research that the lack of partner attending is an area that requires the law enforcement officer to return. The requirement to return not only slows the return to an acceptable level of well-being, but it also requires the use of additional resources that could be used to allow for more participants to attend a PCIS event. One of the most feasible resources to provide this form of service would be to pair a peer mentoring team that consisted of a couple that had similar instances of not attending but later realizing the necessity. This would allow for the peer-driven design of the program to remain constant. Another resource would be to have peer team members created from these identified spouses or significant others that would be available to attend the critical debriefings that occur immediately after a critical stress or traumatic stress event. These new peer team members could begin the process of integrating the targeted group into the SC PCIS program at its inception. The only caveat is the ability for the

partner to leave their place of employment or other responsibilities to attend. To resolve this aspect of not being able to leave the employment, these new peer teams consisting of the law enforcement officer and spouse or significant other could meet after hours or at other times that the couple in need was available. Financial issues could be offset with donated or state-sourced grant money should a loss of work, or another loss of income was created from the attendance of these or other SC PCIS program events. As for child care, this issue can be resolved with partnerships within the local churches or day cares that would care for the children during the meeting times. It is recommended that the information is shared with the officers' command so that the partner can be invited to the event even if the law enforcement officer did not. The only caveat is the ability for the partner to leave their place of employment or other responsibilities to attend. If this is the case, it would be recommended that regional peer teams be created to allow for one-on-one intervention.

RQ 1: Theme 3 – Catalyst Towards Well-Being

The effort to move the participants of the SC PCIS process to the point of recovery the process required the law enforcement officer to tell their story to the entire assembled body of the SC PCIS. This would include other participants, their guests, peer team members, mental health professionals, and other members of the SC PCIS process. This allows for everyone to hear the others' stories, which lead to attendance at the SC PCIS process. The interviews showed that this was the most stressful event of the entire process that showed numerous stress responses, with the two most common being anxiety and avoidance. The observable anxiety responses are bouncing feet, fidgetiness, putting head down, or even leaving the room altogether. The avoidance was visibly avoiding eye contact, standing alone or with others from the same agency, and even the effort to avoid the SC PCIS process, which resulted in participants being

required to attend. Beyond the obvious purpose of sharing the event, it allowed for the barrier to begin to be broken so that acceptable coping skills could be initiated.

The information gained in this area showed that regardless of how the law enforcement officer attended the SC PCIS that there was a positive impact on the levels of well-being. The information should support agency heads in knowing that sending the reluctant officer may be painful at first, but the positive results would later serve the greater good. It is recommended by this researcher, based on the completed research that those involved in a critical stress or traumatic stress event attend an SC PCIS event. The ability to provide early intervention versus attempting to resolve issues that have been allowed to compound is beneficial to the law enforcement officer and the agency. The early intervention can allow for the well-being of the officer to return sooner, and that would improve the quality of life for that law enforcement officer. The overall desire is to retain the officer within the profession and return as a productive member of society, the unhealthy and harmful coping skills that are being deployed must be altered, and it is possible within the SC PCIS. Overcoming the stressors of the first day are emotionally draining and difficult, but it serves to allow the work for day two and three to be meaningful. It will improve the relationships that the law enforcement officer has both personally and professionally. In a profession that has a low retention rate and higher burnout rate, the SC PCIS can provide a possible intervention that is supported by the data from this study that those that have attended the program reach retirement.

RQ 1: Theme 4 – Journey Towards Well-Being

There were two areas from the journey towards well-being that was discovered in the study. Those were the small groups that were led by the peer team members and licensed counselors that performed Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). The

events of day two provided data that the peer team members observed the law enforcement officer display aspects of mood improvement such as smiling, laughter, improved body posture, and the realization that life has meaning again from the burdens of the event being lifted off their shoulders. It is the combination of the small groups, which is peer-driven, and the EMDR that allows for the journey to continue to a status of well-being. The information from this study supported the literature concerning well-being and its influence on stress. Ryu et al. (2020) showed that there was an improvement in the psychosocial health of those that had an intervention that was intended to improve well-being. Improvement in well-being from the SC PCIS would reduce the suffering of trauma-related psychiatric disorders as presented by Wild et al. (2020).

The findings of the study showed that participants were returning to a normal sleep pattern even during the SC PCIS process, and in fact, one peer team member recalled a law enforcement officer having their first night of restful sleep in 165 days since the critical stress event. Further explained in the findings of the study was that relationships improved. One example was a law enforcement officer and his spouse was going out on their first date since the incident, and that occurred on the night of day two of the SC PCIS process. The study's definition of well-being was "peoples' positive evaluations of their lives, which include positive emotions, engagement, satisfaction, and meaning" (Quick & Henderson, 2016, p. 6). Therefore, the SC PCIS process begins to improve well-being of those involved even before the completion of the three-day process. To further align the study to the literature that was reviewed on well-being, Wild et al. (2020) showed that debriefing, like the type that occurs on day two, led to improvement in well-being, sleep issues, and stress levels.

RQ 1: Theme 5 –Well-Being on the Horizon

The study proved that well-being is possible from attendance to the SC PCIS program, and it did provide coping skills and tools for the law enforcement officer to address future issues related to the critical stress or traumatic stress event that created the need for attendance. But it also provided the participants of the program tools that would prove to assist should the occurrence of additional events while continuing to serve as a law enforcement officer. The information garnered from the study showed that the completed SC PCIS allowed for well-being to remerge in the law enforcement officer's life and allowed for those officers to have a positive outlook on the critical stress or traumatic stress event. It allowed for the gaining of strength that was not present after the event and has now allowed for the having feelings that are not burdened by the stress response created by the maladaptive or unacceptable coping mechanisms. The data from the study showed a reduction in the stress response that was created from or returned to the scene of the event. One of the more powerful aspects discovered from the study was the value of networking which was not part of the theoretical review of the literature. The development and implementation of a network that had a common bond with the SC PCIS was proven to be immensely helpful in obtaining long-term assistance or guidance to maintain well-being.

The last area for discussion on this theme covers the area of why a law enforcement officer would need to return to another SC PCIS. The information gathered from the study showed the return was related to two different aspects. The first aspect was that the law enforcement officer did not want to attend the SC PCIS or was so closed-minded to the principles that the person did not adequately participate in the process to obtain its benefit. Within this first aspect is a divergent that the person is conforming to the process but realized that the spouse or significant other should have also come to the SC PCIS, so they have returned to include them in the process. The second aspect would be the need to return for another critical

stress or traumatic stress event that created a new stressor that the officer was not able to successfully defend against. While this may appear to be a weakness of the SC PCIS, this researcher would strongly disagree because the law enforcement officer was able to identify that the coping skills were inadequate, and help was obtained. This would create an environment that would rapidly employ interventions versus negative stress responses such as alcohol and isolation.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 (RQ2) asked: how has the PCIS process impacted you as a peer team member? The research question examined the impact of the peer team members that serve the SC PCIS process and are considered to play a significant role in the success of the program.

RQ 2: Theme 1 and 2

The participants of this research study were actual peer team members that have been involved in the SC PCIS process. The examination determined that there was an improved stress response from serving as a peer team member and that the service created a perpetuating cycle of peer team members that allowed for the program to grow beyond the borders of South Carolina. The participants provided that the therapeutic value of being a peer team member allowed for a reduction in stress response to the critical stress or traumatic stress event that introduced them to the program. It was the program that provided the tools for success. It is especially important because the research by Carleton et al. (2019) found that the increased frequency of traumatic stress events can significantly increase the probability of mental health problems from PTSD to depression. Therefore, the supporting networking that is within the peer teams is extremely strong, and from the data, the peer team member only has to call anyone at any time for assistance. Since the peer team members are previous participants of the SC PCIS, it shows that

there is a long-term intervention that is possible, and rapid deployment of assists is assistance is required.

The continued service as a peer team member allows for the person to pay it forward and receive the benefits of observing others struggling to complete the process and have their well-being return. That in itself is not just regarding but serves as a reminder to the peer team member of the power of the help that is at their fingertips. Chughtai et al. (2014) provided this researcher that trusted leaders could improve the well-being under their span of control, and for this purpose, that is the SC PCIS peer team member. The peer team member may not remain in the span of control once the SC PCIS is completed, but the span would cover the other peer team members that are consolidated in that member's trusted circle. Peer team members will not be exempt from the struggles of the law enforcement profession, but the group has better access to and understanding of negative or maladaptive stress responses. The combination of the two themes for this research question was performed together since theme two is related to relationships that are foundational both internally and externally to the program. It was the work as a peer team member that presented a positive impact on the members' lives and assisted in their growth as a person, both personally and professionally, based on the coded data from the research.

RQ 2: Theme 3: Making it Work

The last interview question posed to the study participants proved to be interesting in that the responses were similar among the participants. The design of the SC PCIS leans heavily on two internal parts, and those are the peer team members and the licensed counselors that are involved with the participants over the course of the three days. The coded data showed that the diversity of the people at the SC PCIS providing care proved to be a valuable and irreplaceable

asset. The design explained by the participants of the study and the literature reviewed in the research showed that there was adequate support between the two. The participants of the study discussed in the interviews, and it was supported after the coding process that the program design to influence as a whole those that are within the three-day program was supported. The design of the SC PCIS was intended to provide such a level of intervention, and that was validated by the completed research in this dissertation.

The totality of the program allows for the intervention of harmful stress factors of the participants in multifaceted areas. This information shows that while the use of one form may provide intervention, it is the use of both that provides the return to well-being that is needed. The information should be shared with the agencies within the state because law enforcement that is receiving mental health assistance could benefit from the pairing with a peer team member. The intervention will always serve as a better solution versus allowing an issue to permeate all areas of law enforcement officers' lives. This pair would improve the results for the issues that the person may be facing.

There is a strong belief in the process that is shared amongst those interviewed for the study, and this level of belief is transferred to those that are participating in the SC PCIS. The participants of the study supported the design and commented that if it were not an effective program, it would not have served as an example for nearly 13 other states. The concern was raised if the program could accommodate the growing need for stress intervention that the SC PCIS addresses. This was attributed to the reduction in the barriers preventing law enforcement officers from seeking assistance to such critical stress or traumatic stress events. The increased support by agency heads places further strain on the program that may be required to add additional PCIS dates within the yearly calendar. It is an issue that must be shared with the

controlling powers over the SC PCIS process, so the program will maintain its level of success. The findings of this study will be shared with those authorities, and it will be the recommendation from this researcher that plans need to be created to address a generation that is no longer apprehensive about receiving assistance with their mental health.

The concern that was just presented causes concern for this researcher because it could create a cycle that the program would not be able to support. The addition of additional dates is one solution, but it may not reach a level to allow for sustaining service, so one method to assist would be to confront maladaptive stress responses earlier. This can be performed by sharing the findings of this study with the agencies and the recommendations of including family members at the first attendance versus returning, so that availability would not be taken. Another area could be to have those that need to return for a similar issue receive a shortened two-day program that skips the rigors of day one since they are returning for the same issue. This could be useful for those that are currently seeking mental health care within their respective agency. Further information can be gathered from other PCIS programs to see if those programs have experienced similar issues and if there were any resolutions created that could be included in the state of South Carolina. The ability of the program to provide it serves is paramount to the well-being of those that have reached a level of stress response that requires this form of intervention.

Implications

The results of the study have implications for the varying law enforcement agencies and the supporting entities of the SC PCIS. The study showed that the program has a positive and significant influence on the well-being of all those that participate in the program. The South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program is governed and controlled by the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED), and the results of the study will provide assistance to these

bodies to maintain or obtain funding to continue the program that is providing vital intervention in a profession where a person's life can be altered in mere seconds. This is the first in-depth study of the SC PCIS in nearly eight years, and the completed research provides an understanding beyond just the design of the program, rather provides an understanding that the SC PCIS program is effective in returning a person negatively influenced by an event to a place of well-being.

The study assists law enforcement agency heads in the intervention for their employees that have negatively responded to an event creating a harmful environment for not only them but those whom the law enforcement officer interacts with. The well-being of the officers not only improves areas of mental health, but it can be used to reduce the levels of burnout, compassion fatigue, and reduce the high levels of turnover that law enforcement agencies in the state of South Carolina are experiencing. While agencies can improve leadership, the well-being of officers under a supervisor's span of control will always be important in retention. Research has shown this, so the SC PCIS can be utilized as a tool to reduce turnover for those that are under constant and frequent stress environments. The study showed that incidents involving children could be especially traumatic, so the investigators that are involved in crime against children would benefit greatly from the SC PCIS. The program can be used for inappropriate or unacceptable stress responses for areas outside of critical stress or traumatic stress events, and it is at no cost to the agency or the participants.

The study also showed that the program could provide long-term intervention for those that have been exposed to a critical stress or traumatic stress event. The skills that are acquired over a short period of time have a significant influence on those that have participated. This was apparent from the desire to pay it forward by serving as peer team members. The study showed

that this desire was as soon as the completion of day three. The study showed that those that have participated in the SC PCIS would share their individual success stories within their circles, but one of the greatest implications in this area is that those that have completed the program now have the skills to identify peers or family that may be having an adverse response to a stress event, and that can possibly save lives.

The findings of the study showed that other states have used the South Carolina PCIS program as a model, but it has not been so with a majority of the states within the United States. This could be because the endeavor could appear to be too daunting or costly, so it would be beneficial for the SC LEAP to create a guide on how to create a program from the ground up to include not just the formatting of the program and those needed to be involved, but the funding sources for sustaining a program. It is one thing to start a program, but the ability to maintain it over a long period of time can prove to be difficult. The funding is important, but so is the reasoning for how the program benefits the agencies and communities that send its officers to the program. It must be a total investment of all parties that are influenced by law enforcement professionals.

The program successfully intervenes in the harmful stress responses that occur from a critical stress or traumatic event, but the program is designed and intended for law enforcement personnel and those related to the officer or the field. The adverse effects of the events would transpose over to other first responders, so it is viable that the formatting of the program can be assimilated into a program for fire and emergency medical service personnel. The program design would require the identification of peer team members to go through the training program so that they can garner the needed skills. The mental health professionals could remain the same

or train others that are more involved within these professions, but EMDR would need to be a constant because of its effectiveness in the participants' stress response.

The study did find that one peer team member did have a negative response to serving on the peer team that required that participant to step away. The need to step away was not from the exposure to the trauma associated with the SC PCIS program but the overuse as a peer team member in an area that lacked enough peer team members to assist officers in need. It is recommended that regional peer teams be created with a rotating schedule to intercede in such overuse. The program must safeguard those that are needed just as it protects those that attend the SC PCIS program. It would be further recommended that some screening effort be made at regular intervals by the program to determine if there was a peer team member approaching burnout.

The last recommended change to the SC PCIS program would be for day one. The research has shown that this is by far one of the most difficult days for the law enforcement officers that are participating in the SC PCIS, and the most significant stressor is telling their respective stories. It is further compounded by the observers that are not part of the program, such as department heads or any other person that is not a peer team member, mental health professional, or clergy. It is recommended that these outside observers or any other observer that is not intimately related to the three-day process observe the day one activity from another room via some form of video conferencing program. This would reduce the unneeded stressors that are being experienced by those that are telling their stories.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations

The main delimitation of the study was to conduct focus of the study on the state of South Carolina PCIS because it has been serving as the blueprint for up to 13 other states that now have a PCIS process. It is imperative to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a program that now has an influence on a vast number of law enforcement officers nationwide. This is due to the fact that each state's PCIS welcomes any law enforcement officer, even if that law enforcement officer is from another state. The other delimitation was the decision for the criteria of the participant of the study. Based on the fact that there are four PCIS events within South Carolina annually, the participants had to have at least 15 SC PCIS events. This allowed for the data collected to cover a minimum span of three to four years. The average number of SC PCIS events for the participants of the study was 31. Therefore, based on that number, the data collected spanned approximately seven to eight years.

Limitations

The first limitation of this study was the inability to interview the actual participants of the SC PCIS process. The decision to protect the identity of those seeking assistance with their mental health overrode the ability of this researcher to gain access. The ability to gather the data directly from the participants could provide other areas of success or failure of the program. The other limitation was the number of participants in the study. The initial request for 20 participants was sent out with the recruitment information from the director of SCLEP, Dr. Eric Skidmore; however, there were only 11 peer team members that volunteered to be part of the study. While the number was 55% participants, this researcher was able to obtain data saturation with the 11 participants, so it is unlikely that the addition of nine participants would drastically alter the results.

Recommendations for Future Studies

The first recommendation for future studies would be that this research design be applied to other states that are using the SC PCIS model so that a larger sample group could be obtained and analyzed. The collected data could support the continued formatting or provide additional areas that could be added to improve the program, even in the state of South Carolina. The second recommendation would be to perform a quantitative study on the SC PCIS. The SC PCIS collects multiple data points utilizing accepted diagnostic tools at the beginning, end, and at intervals over the following years. The measures are administered by licensed mental health professionals to the participant, and this data could be used to support the program beyond this study. This form of research should be continued with the other PCIS programs that have utilized South Carolina. Another recommendation for future studies would be to collect quantitative data on how influential the SC PCIS is on the aspects of burnout, compassion fatigue, and retention. The last recommendation for a future study would be a mixed method to the community and religious leaders in the state of South Carolina on their understanding and perception of the program. This will allow researchers to determine if this target group understands the negative attributes of stress and the dangers if not addressed. Additionally, if this group did lack the knowledge, it would benefit them to attend the SC PCIS process as observers.

Summary

This qualitative study confirmed that the SC PICS process had a positive impact on the well-being of the participants that completed the program as well as a positive impact on the peer team members that serve as a core foundation of the SC PCIS program. The data collected from the study aligned and supported the theoretical literature of the study and proved to be some insights that were not available within the scope of the literature review. The general strain

theory can be intervened with the deployment of the program for those that are suffering from the frequent severity and certain harmful elements that are occurred daily. Critical stress and traumatic stress event will have an impact though it would carry from person to person, there is a proven program that can provide skills to identify and seek the vast resources of the SC PCIS team.

The program offers state-wide free assistance to any law enforcement officer that is in need of help with a critical stress or traumatic stress event that has overwhelmed the coping mechanisms. While there will never be a way to remove the fluid and dynamic world that thrusts law enforcement officers into life-or-death decisions, there is a program that provides a method to return that law enforcement officer to becoming a productive member of society. The improvement in well-being can provide long-term coping skills that could provide a positive influence on the carrying aspects of the law enforcement officer's life. The support of the program is known around the state, and with the findings of this study, there can remain no doubt that it would prove to be an asset to those in need. The long-term benefits are visible from the findings of the study because of the desire of those that have completed the SC PCIS to become peer team members. The pay it forward that is known for the program has been supported.

The gaps within the research on the SC PCIS have been filled, and a basis for future research has now begun with the completion of this study. The person that has been created by the participants of this study was Dr. Eric Skidmore and his dedication to the men and women of the profession of law enforcement. His guidance and vision allow for the growth of the program nationwide and the recruitment of other assets to assist with the SC PCIS. All of the success of this program would not be possible if it were not for every person who has given themselves to

it, and the profession is in a better place because of them all that served in the past, in the current, and in the future.

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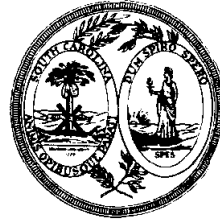
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Appendix A - Consent from SCLEAP to Perform Study



SOUTH CAROLINA LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

January 31, 2022

Michael Evans
Ph.D. Candidate



Dear Mr. Evans

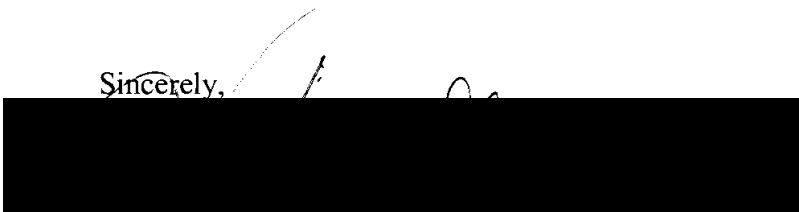
After careful review of your research proposal entitled “An Examination of the Impact of the South Carolina Post Critical Incident Seminar on the Mental Health of its Participants”, We have decided to grant you permission to access our peer team membership list and invite them to participate in your study.

We will contact members from our Peer Teams to participate, and Michael Evans may use the list to contact our members to invite them to participate in his/her research study.

We grant permission for Michael Evans to contact Peer Team Members to invite them to participate in his research study.

We are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,



Rev. Dr. Eric Skidmore
South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program

SCLEAP EMAIL:
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SCLEAP: APP STORE/GOOGLE PLAY

Appendix B - Participant Consent Form

Consent

Title of the Project: Impact of the Completed South Carolina Post Critical Incident Seminar on the Well-Being of the Law Enforcement Participants

Principal Investigator: Michael P. Evans, Doctoral Candidate, Helms School of Government, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a South Carolina Peer Team member that has received the required training from the South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program and has participated in a minimum of 15 Post Critical Incident Seminars (PCIS). Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the impact on the well-being of the completed PCIS on the participants, and how the PCIS process has impacted the peer team members.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in an in-person via Teams Meeting, a video-recorded interview that will take no more than 2 hours.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include improved understanding of the impact on the well-being of law enforcement officers that have had negative or uncontrollable responses to a critical stress event, so they have ability to return as a productive member of society.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. Peer team members have extensive experience and support structures within SCLEAP and SCPCIS.

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on an encrypted drive locked in a safe within my office at the Sumter Police Department. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted] and all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Recordings will be stored on an encrypted drive locked in a safe within my office at the Sumter Police Department. After three years, will be erased. The researcher and members of his doctoral committee will have access to these recordings.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision on whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University and the SC PCIS. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Michael Evans You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at Removed or Removed and/or email] You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Gregory Koehle at Removed.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record and/or video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix C - SCLEAP PCIS Peer Mentor Interview Questions

SCLEAP PCIS Peer Mentor Interview Questions

RQ1: What is the impact of the completed South Carolina Post Critical Incident Seminar (PCIS) on the well-being of the law enforcement officer participants as perceived by the PCIS Peer Team Members?

RQ2: How has the PCIS process impacted you as a peer team member?

Questions concerning the perceived impact of the completed PCIS Process:

1. Participants have been exposed to numerous different types of critical stress events. Which three types of critical events have the most impact on the participants' well-being, based upon your experience?
2. Describe the common themes, attitudes, or stress responses that are identified at the beginning of the PCIS process.
3. What types of personal life stressors seem to be the most common among participants?
4. How does drug and alcohol usage impact the daily functions of the participants?
5. What are the most common maladaptive coping mechanisms utilized by participants and how is their daily functioning affected?
6. Describe what are the most stressful parts of the PCIS for participants.
7. On the first day of PCIS, what is your overall perception of participants regarding daily functioning/mood/attitude?
8. On the first day, how would you describe the emotional impact on participants?
9. While discussing/sharing their critical event at the beginning of PCIS, did you observe participants experiencing any emotional or physiological responses? If so, give examples.
10. At the end of PCIS, did you observe a change in emotional and physiological responses when participants discussed their critical event?
11. Describe the stress responses of the participants at the beginning, during, and at the completion of the PCIS.
12. Is there a noticeable impact on the well-being of the participants during the PCIS process? If so, explain.
13. Is there a noticeable impact on the well-being of the participants after PCIS? If so, explain.
14. Describe how stress from the event has specifically affected participants' relationships in their life - this may be with family, romantic partners, friends, co-workers, etc.
15. Is there a noticeable impact from the completed PCIS process on the participants' life, both professionally and personally? If so, explain.
16. Explain why the peer sessions are influential in impacting the well-being of the participants.
17. How does the PCIS address participants that are displaying suicidal thoughts or ideologies?
18. Explain the reasons that a participant would attend more than one PCIS.

19. How does EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) impact the participants' perception of the critical stress event?
20. How does being a peer team member impact your well-being?
21. How has being a peer team member impacted the relationship you have with your critical stress event?
22. How has being a peer team member impacted your personal relationships?
23. How has being a peer team member impacted you at work? This may include changes in your motivation, stress levels on the job, or performance.
24. In your own words, why does the PCIS work?