Stress at a Juvenile Detention Center: Identifying Stressors and Examining the Coping Process

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STRESS AT A JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER: IDENTIFYING STRESSORS AND EXAMINING THE COPING PROCESS

by

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In the examination of the literature dealing with stress as it relates to corrections, normally “juvenile corrections workers are not considered, due to the dearth of stress-related research” (Huckabbe, 1992, p. 479). This thesis is a qualitative project designed to analyze detention workers' views on stress. I was interested in finding out the following two things: (1) the workers' identification of the major stressors in their job, and (2) the ways the workers coped with the stressors identified.

Structured interviews were conducted with one third (12) of the detention staff that worked at a forty bed juvenile detention center in Michigan. The interviews were hand recorded and then the findings were reported and analyzed for patterns in the responses to the interview schedule.

Two major stressors were identified: (1) poor relationships between the staff and the administrative personnel, and (2) the job position of supervisor. The coping process was a relatively quick process, except for workers who were supervisors.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This research will examine stress experienced by workers at a juvenile detention facility. Stress is very common in society today; and stress experienced by workers continues to increase (Myers, 1996). For the purpose of this research, stress is partially defined as "the nonspecific (that is common) result of any demand upon the body" (Selye, 1980, p. vii). Expanding on this definition, there needs to be a recognition of the possibility of an inverse transactional relationship between the body and environment. The idea being presented here is that "stress does not reside solely in aspects of the individual or of the environment, but in the perceived interplay of the two" (Dewe, et al., 1989, p. 993). Further, the transactions are viewed as demands that the individual has to learn to cope with. It is this transactional aspect that is helpful when defining stress, due to the integrative and interactive allowances. In order to understand some of the impact of stress on workers at a detention center, there will be a review of juvenile justice, correctional philosophies, stress related literature, and the coping process associated with stress.
Overview of Juvenile Justice

The origin of the juvenile justice system in the United States dates back to 1899 when the “first juvenile code and court in Cook County, Illinois” (Regoli and Hewitt, 1995, p. 303) was created. The court was created out of a social movement of the times known as the child savers. The child savers wanted to help those who they viewed as less fortunate, and focused on the children that were viewed as problematic. This organization thought that the children were not the problem, but rather poor environments caused the children to engage in problematic behaviors. They supported the notion that, “the fundamental idea of the juvenile court is a return to paternalism. It is the acknowledgement by the state and its relationship as the parent to every child within its borders” (Regoli and Hewitt, 1995, p. 303). It was through the work of the child savers that the juvenile justice system was created with a treatment orientation. However, this treatment orientation would draw a lot of criticism, especially in the 1960s and thereafter, leading to an apparent shift toward punishment rather than rehabilitation.

While a more detailed history and discussion of rehabilitation is presented in the literature review, the pendulum concept and how it relates to the juvenile justice system will now be addressed. The pendulum concept in juvenile justice and detention swings from promoting rehabilitation to promoting retribution. From 1899 until the 1980’s, the pendulum sided toward rehabilitation. However, one landmark decision helps to identify the more dramatic swing toward a retribution-oriented
juvenile justice system. The Stanford v. Kentucky decision was as follows:

On June 26, 1989, in a 5 to 4 majority, the High Court ruled that as far as the Eighth Amendment’s prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment is concerned, a person who commits capital murder at 16 years of age is old enough to be subjected to the death penalty. (Inciardi, 1990, p. 750)

This decision supported a framework for punitive sanctions against juveniles who commit felony offenses. Consequently, as will be argued later, a swing in philosophy can affect treatment programs existing in juvenile detention centers, and put larger demands (stress) on the direct care worker.

There is a lack of research which addresses detention-based juvenile treatment programs and the links to worker stress. Therefore, literature from other human service sectors, such as corrections and police work, will be introduced to inform the research on stress in juvenile corrections. Cornelius (1994) suggested that a good starting place for understanding worker stress was within the correctional philosophy of the facility in which the person works. It was also proposed that the correctional workers would “find it helpful to understand [how] different philosophical approaches to corrections can affect their job and stress they may feel” (p. 24).

Poole and Regoli (1980) examined stress among correctional officers. The authors focused on role ambiguity as an important source of stress. Role ambiguity was determined to be a major stressor because of the “shifting correctional philosophies and institutional policies concerning the handling and control of inmates” (p. 215). Before the transition from rehabilitation to a retribution custodial
philosophy, the guards were able to use more of their own discretion in dealing with the correctional clients. Therefore, detention workers, similar to those in adult corrections, have had to deal with changes in the way they manage juveniles (Soler, 1997).

Further, there are many other stressors that can affect workers in the human services field, including detention center staff. Myers (1996) found a pattern of three major stressors that detention center workers identified. They included "dangers of the job (defined as actual assault), vulnerability to the client (defined as client allegations of abuse or mistreatment against staff members), and communication with the administration of the facility and insufficient amounts of training" (p. 3). It was reported that the major stressors centered around communication and day to day contact with the staff and juveniles. Several other stressors have been identified from working in corrections and the human service field. The additional stressors have been in the following categories: Shift work (Lavie et al., 1989, Rose et al., 1989, Aron and Violanti, 1995), the correctional environment itself (Gerstien et al., 1986, Walters, 1996), the need for structure (Rosefield, 1983), and interpersonal violence (Leather et al., 1990, Dembo and Dertke, 1986).

To continue, it has been documented that stress is a serious issue in the human services fields, including juvenile corrections. Therefore, an important issue worth further exploration from the general stress literature is the coping process. Several studies (Long and Flood, 1993, Raffety et al., 1997, and Schwartz and Stone,
1993) have focused on this coping process. The consensus among the authors was that there have been few studies that have focused on coping with stressors, especially, coping in the areas of stress at work and at home, and the anticipation of an impending stressor. Further examination of the coping process will be addressed in the literature review.

Statement of the Problem

Several stressors (both physical and mental) affect people who work at juvenile detention centers. Therefore, can the sources of stress (stressors), and the coping process of dealing with the stressors, be specifically identified to give guidance for the worker to be successful in the performance of their job?

Importance to the Field

The specific topic of stress experienced from working at a detention facility was selected for primarily two reasons. First, this topic was selected because of its importance to the practical work world. The researcher is employed at a detention center and feels obligated to help detention center workers find ways to be successful in coping with stress.

Additionally, this research is important because of the lack of studies that have dealt with stress that occurs from working at a detention center. In fact, in an examination of the literature dealing with stress as it relates to corrections, normally
“juvenile corrections workers are not considered, due to the dearth of stress-related research” (Huckabbe, 1992, p. 479). Further, “researchers have yet to sufficiently identify the factors that contribute to the stress correctional officers experience” (Grossi et al., 1996, p. 103). Most of the literature, textbooks, and studies that address detention centers, or juvenile justice, primarily deal with theories that focus on the juveniles, not the workers. Everything appears to be juvenile focused. This is important, but there also needs to be more guidance for the workers to deal with stress. The National Juvenile Detention Association (NJDA) acknowledges that there is a lack of research regarding stress experienced from working in a detention center. The NJDA drafted the following position statement: "Stress increase for youth and staff often results in decreased patience, and a rise in temper flare ups and a rise in behavior outbursts as well as physical altercations" (NJDA NEWS, 1996, p. 4).

What will follow in the subsequent chapter will be an expansion of the literature on rehabilitation and treatment in juvenile justice and detention. Also, literature on detention-based treatment and links to stress experienced by the workers will be examined. These two areas will be accompanied by related research, on stress and coping, a summary of the common themes, and the most important aspects of the stress and coping literature for this research.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Juvenile Justice: A Focus on Treatment

In juvenile justice, more specifically juvenile detention centers, there are two models that describe the institutional environment: custodial and program. The custodial model "implies a secure setting which emphasizes the continued custody of the juvenile" (Roush, 1997, p. 88). The program model implies "a range of helpful services targeting the personal, social and educational adjustment of youth" (Roush, 1997, p. 89). While both models have been seen in juvenile detention the focus has been changing towards a more custodial and adult-like focus.

Mears' (1998) examined national and Texas juvenile justice reforms, and noted how they have "been driven largely by a desire to 'get tough on crime'"(p. 443). It was proposed that juvenile justice reforms are part of a more general cycle or ongoing battle between retribution and rehabilitation philosophies. In providing a background for juvenile justice reforms, U.S. Supreme court cases were thought to have made changes that were not "merely procedural but led to an overcriminalization of the juvenile court. In turn, the sentencing philosophy toward juveniles shifted from rehabilitation to retribution" (Mears, 1998, p. 445-446).
Because of these changes, including Texas’ new Title 3 legislation that focuses more on the punishment of juveniles, juvenile detention workers must adapt to a new work environment. Mears addresses this issue in his section of research in juvenile reforms, where it is pointed out that current research neglects how the workers will perceive and adapt to the change.

Basemore et al., (1994) research focused on juvenile justice reforms and the effect that changes have on detention workers. This experimental study focused on two detention centers, one which did not change policies and one that underwent several policy changes. The research uncovered an important issue. Regardless of whether the type of reform leans towards a rehabilitaion or retribution philosophy:

Policymakers should also be interested in any ‘spillover’ effects, or unintended consequences (positive or negative) of detention reforms on attitudes of Detention Care Workers toward the detention job and toward the organization itself. Reforms intended to modify policies governing interaction with detainees, for example, might inadvertently affect several experiential aspects of the DCW job including job stress, role conflict or role ambiguity, job security, and job involvement. (Basemore et al., 1994. p. 42).

Soler’s (1997) research focused on this continued theme of harsher, less treatment oriented detention facilities. It was presented that “thirty five states have changed their laws in the past two years to prosecute more juveniles in adult court” (p. 38). Further, the wave of custodial practices has had leaders in communities re-naming detention centers to sound stricter. In Virginia, for example, the governor changed “the name of the state juvenile facilities from ‘learning centers’ to ‘juvenile corrections’ centers” (p. 38). Nonetheless, treatment plays a major role in detention
centers. Treatment in detention is designed not only to control the juvenile, but to help them learn and think for themselves, and to be responsible for their own actions. Furthermore, it is the "interpersonal relationships between staff and residents that are the keys for maintaining order and security" (p. 89) at juvenile facilities.

The treatment models that are implemented at detention centers range from bootcamp oriented, token economy, control/critical thinking errors philosophy to a more group-oriented philosophy such as Positive Peer Culture programs. For a greater understanding of a treatment model, the Positive Peer Culture (PPC) treatment modality will be elaborated on.

PPC can be categorized as a "therapeutic community model" (Regoli and Hewitt, 1991, p. 409). This type of treatment modality encourages "both staff and youth... to act and to perceive each other as people rather than as performers in stereotyped roles" (p. 409). PPC also "serves to reduce the social distance between the various factions of the institution and fosters a cooperative atmosphere" (p. 409). PPC suggests that the best way for a person to deal with their own problems, such as committing delinquent acts, is to help others with similar problems. PPC "teaches students to assume responsibility for helping one another" (Vorrath and Brendtro, 1985, p. xx). This program uses peer pressure to get juveniles to confront and address their problems in a group setting. This modality sets several guidelines for juveniles and staff regarding how to interact and deal with problems, like interpersonal violence, that occur in detention centers.
Whether detention centers should use a custody or treatment model can be a function of how one defines emphasis. Roush (1997) examined responses of a 1980 study of detention administrators and found that “a dual purpose for detention was defined ... as having primary emphasis on custody (control) and the secondary emphasis on rehabilitation (treatment)” (p. 89). The examination of the administrators responses demonstrated that 33% agreed with having a primary and secondary emphasis, whereas 33% thought that detention should be custody only.

Besides definition issues, other important areas that are affected by the treatment to custody shift include resident to staff ratios and physical restraints. Roush (1997) pointed out that “custody orientated facilities are often particularly vulnerable to problems linked to poor staff/student ratios” (p. 89). The major problem is that since the custody philosophy implies “stringent controls [that] characterize the environment, juveniles frequently do not feel safe enough to express their concerns and emotions” (p. 89). In addition, less staff means fewer opportunities for juveniles to build helping relationships. These types of custody related factors create environments in which residents act out and have to be physically restrained.

In summary, an examination of juvenile justice highlights three issues. First, the philosophical change has been towards a retribution based system. It was also pointed out that 35 states have followed this pattern with changes toward a punishment-based juvenile justice system. Second, these changes have had an effect on juvenile justice practitioners. Specifically, it was pointed out that change can
affect a worker's stress, which in turn could make treatment of juveniles increasingly difficult. Lastly, there was discussion of what treatment is, and how it is used at detention facilities. Furthermore, it was pointed that the use of treatment in detention is all a subjective decision on the part of the individual administrators of detention facilities.

General Stress Related Literature

While Dewe, Cox and Ferguson (1993) examined many stress related concepts, they primarily looked at “two factors [that] may contribute to the confusion surrounding the concepts of stress” (p. 5). They noted that stress continues to be defined in several different ways and, because of the nature of stress, definitions of it should not attempt to be all inclusive. It was proposed that “stress relates to those transactions where the environmental demands are perceived as challenging or taxing on the individual’s ability to cope, thus threatening the well being and necessitating individual effort to resolve the problem” (p. 6). The authors concluded that this philosophical definition of the stress process is helpful, but it is the researcher’s job to find a way to integrate this idea into an imperical measurement practice.

Selye (1980) also poses the question of “What is stress?”. Selye proposed that many people research stress “yet remarkably few people define the concept the same way or even bother to attempt a clear cut definition” (p. vii). Selye explained
that stress is conceptualized differently by people who work in a variety of professions. Further, the definition of stress depends on what a person does in their daily patterns of living. Selye believed it was important to define stress, and he formulated the working definition of stress as:

“the nonspecific (that is common) result of any demand upon the body,” be it mental of somatic demand for survival and the accomplishment of our aims. [Further,] is that formulation of this definition, based on objective indicators such as bodily and chemical changes which appear after any demand, that has brought the subject (so popular now that it is often referred to a stressology) out of the stage of vague cocktail party chit chat into the domain of science. (Selye, 1980, pp. vii-viii)

The above definition focuses on the fact that stress is nonspecific and results from any demand on the body.

Cornelius (1994) addressed the sources of stress (stressors) that happen to people who work in corrections. When defining stressors, he reported that “a stressor is something that produces stress. It is the event, person, or circumstance that triggers a physical and mental reaction” (p. 4). He continued his working definition of stressors by breaking the stressors down into two categories. The two categories of stressors are negative and positive. The proposed list of negative stressors that was presented stated “Correctional staff... encounter a gamut of possible stressors, including inmate fights, bad odors, noisy cellblocks, long lists of grievances,... [and] inmate attacks on officers” (p. 6). The positive stressors were described as things that inmates might do for a guard that might make the officer feel good. Examples could be an inmate drawing a guard a picture or simply saying thank you.
Wray, Luft, and Highland (1996) expand on the previously discussed concept of positive stress. They proposed that a certain amount of stress is important in human performance at work. They state that:

When managed effectively, stress can boost productivity, enhance creativity, and maximize a person’s potential. Winning the lottery, receiving a promotion, going on a vacation, getting married, having children, and excelling on an exam ordinarily represent examples of **positive stress**. [However], the body does not know the difference between positive and negative stress, and reacts the same physiologically. (Wray et al., 1996, p. 313)

The authors further discussed that it is important for the individual worker to learn to maintain positive and negative stress by learning to deal with stress effectively. One of the most common mistakes is trying to abolish stress entirely.

General stress theory presented, it is important to continue with an overview of the general stressors that affect correctional workers. In an overview of stressors presented by Rosefield (1983), he examined a variety of stressors that can affect workers at correctional facilities. Rosefield hypothesized that there were a possibility of 32 stressors that can affect correction officers. He formulated a list of the ten most important general categories of stressors that affect the worker. Four of these categories were seen as most relevant to juvenile detention centers. They are:

- General Stress-- so named because this category includes all but one of the 32 stressors. The most significant were tension between officers and inmates and slow promotions.

- Role definition--the difficulty officers have in knowing exactly what is expected of them, particularly during a crisis.

- Need for structure--based on the twin problems of overcrowding and understaffing, which result in poor control and stressful working conditions.
Personal safety--stressors reflecting officers’ concerns for their personal safety as well as their lack of acceptable places to ventilate those concerns. Apparently the stress is increased by the macho image officers feel they must project (Rosefield, 1983, pp. 6-7).

Jones, Fletcher, and Ibbetson (1991) described a variety of stressors that occur amongst social workers. Jones et al., focused on trying to create a stress model. While trying to accomplish the model, there was discussion that dealt with the conceptualization of internal stressors. The idea was that stressors “manifest themselves in terms of psychological symptoms (for example, feeling of anxiety or depression), physiological symptoms (for example, loss of appetite), behavioral outcomes (for example, absenteeism), or medical conditions” (p.444). By explaining stressors, it is important to realize that many stressors can originate either “from within the person or from the outside environment” (p.444).

Detention Related Research: Demand on the Worker

Stated previously, there is a lack of research addressing youth detention treatment programs, and their link to worker stress (ie. demands on the worker). Therefore, literature from adult corrections and the human services sector will be introduced.

Cheek and Miller (1983) proposed that the “lack of recognition and support of correctional officers in the managerial aspect of their role generates a lot of stress” (p. 11). It is important to understand that the correctional officer is the front line
manager of the correctional clients. The officers diagnose the inmates that need specific services, and enforce "rules that do not fit" (p. 13). Most rules are created by those in higher positions, and this role conflict occurs because "officers feel that they have no power to change poor or impractical rules" (p. 13).

Grossi, Keil, and Vito (1996) looked specifically at role stress (demands) and how it affected the worker. Normally, correctional workers experience role conflict when they "perceive discordance between treatment and custody orientations of their peers, supervisors, administrators and inmates" (p. 104). The study found that experience was a major factor when it came to role conflict with the officers. Those with more experience dealt with the demands better than those with less experience.

Dembo and Derke (1986) interviewed 53 staff from a large southern youth center. The goal was to determine what caused stress to the workers, and to debunk the myth that staff are hostile. They wanted to promote their theory that "personnel should be regarded as victims of their work environment" (p. 333) which included the demands of their job. The four areas researched looked at relationships and staff stress, demographic characteristics in relation to perceived work setting variables, frequency of detainee problem behavior, and a need for various services. Further, they reported two major producers of demands on the worker within the detention center. The two major demands were youths acting out and a need for more services for the youths.

Another demand on the worker that occurs from working in corrections is
inter-personal violence. This demand is ever present in the correctional treatment
setting due to the direct dealing with the client. Leather, Cox and Farnsworth (1990)
conceptualized that “it is not only the violence which offers a contemporary source of
stress but also the threat of violence” (p. 3). Further, there was an examination of the
occupations that encounter violence at work. Leather et al., presented a list of over
20 jobs that put the employee at risk for violence, this included prison officers.
Leather et al., comment on the increase of stress at certain jobs, due to the fact that
most encounters at these types of work occur “where the victim is providing a
service, and the aggressor is in the role of the client or customer for that service”
(p.3).

Wykes and Whittington (1991) looked at ways nurses, and other mental
health staff, cope with the stress of being assaulted at work. Their research supported
the idea that there are three major demands on the worker that “were supervisory,
administrative, and averse“ (1991, p. 37). It was the “averse component (e.g.,
working with patients I am afraid of) which mainly determined levels of stress and
well being” (p. 37). The study examined “ one particular stressor-- being the subject
of a violent attack by a patient” (p. 38). The study pointed out that many of the
workers felt a sense of strain after being assaulted. Further, one of the problems with
the strain of being assaulted was that the staff had little time to cope with the attack,
and in many cases “had to continue working with their assailant, or with other similar
patients” (p. 45), which put them in jeopardy of being assaulted again. In concluding,
the authors looked at ways that the nurses had to cope with the assault since there was such little time allowed. The three major ways were to talk about the incident, deny the incident, or simply to continue to re-experience the incident.

From the definition of stress and the categories of stressors presented, it is obvious from the literature that workers are confronting a serious problem. The next logical step is examining how workers cope with the stress presented to them daily.

Coping

Dewe (1989) examined the nature of work stress and came up with four general themes that are normally associated with this type of research. One theme focused on “the need to explicitly acknowledge the role of coping in the stress process” (p. 995). To examine the stress process, Dewe studied 223 individuals who worked at a large mail order company. After administering a questionnaire with open ended and forced choice questions, several conclusions were drawn. The first “is the fact that the way in which an individual copes appears to be central to providing meaning and shaping stressful experiences” (p. 1009). To explain, it is the appraisal of the stressor itself that is important for coping research. An example would be that a positive appraisal of a stressor normally is associated with a positive coping response. Further, most research focuses on the elements of the stress process, instead of focusing on the transaction itself. In order to understand this process, the researcher needs to further “investigate the strategies that individuals take to cope”
Raffety, Smith, and Ptacek (1997) examined the coping process that takes place when an individual has the knowledge of an anticipated stressor. Specifically, Raffety et al. researched a position that stated:

The coping process may start with anticipation of a stressful event, may continue through the stressful event itself, and may extend into the period after the event as individuals await feedback or deal with the consequences of their performance (Raffety et al., 892).

The anticipated stressor for this research was an upcoming college examination in which the analysis of the coping process was accomplished by asking third and fourth year undergraduate students to fill out coping diaries. The examination of the coping diaries coincided with previous studies done on the coping process. The study supported the previous finding that coping processes are multidimensional constructs, meaning there are many different variables that can affect coping processes. Further, it was found there is no one dimensional definition of the coping process, and that the process cannot be seen as a "static variable" (p. 904) that does not change over time.

Schwartz and Stone (1993) examined the way that people cope with stress at work and at home. They looked at the ways that 84 married couples coped with stress at their work and non-work situations. Specifically, they looked at the major stressors that the couples had to cope with daily. From an evaluation of the questionnaires, the research posited many specific and general patterns that developed. To start, specific patterns showed that poor interactions with people at work tallied 75% of what people viewed to be work problems. Further, "20% of the
most bothersome problems of the day, including weekends when most subjects did not work, were related to happenings at work” (p. 59). These specific patterns led the researchers to conclude that the stressors, and the way that people cope with them, start from the introduction of any event at work or at home. Each person then goes through the process of appraising different situations that are introduced. This appraisal then guides the person as to how to cope with each and every stressor.

Summary

There were several important themes that were presented in the review of the literature on worker stress in the corrections field. First, when conducting research on worker stress in the field of corrections, it is important to incorporate the larger picture of the system in general. As presented, a custody retribution philosophy is the dominant view as to where the justice system is headed (Regoli and Hewitt, 1980, Cornelius, 1994, and Soler, 1997). Understanding this broader picture then allows the researcher to focus more specifically on stress issues.

Secondly, when conducting worker stress research, it is very important to have a working definition of what is meant by the word stress. Dewe et al., (1993) addressed the issue that “stress continues to be defined in several different ways” (p. 5). When researching worker stress in detention, it is important to get a working definition of stress from the workers which should help the research and the workers being studied. Once you have a working definition, it is then easier to identify the
factors that contribute to the stress that is experienced (Grossi, et al., 1996). Once the factors have been identified that fit the working definition, the most important part of worker stress research can begin.

This researcher, who works at a detention center, believes that the coping process is the most important area in worker stress research. The coping process is critical primarily due to its practical purpose of helping detention workers create coping strategies for dealing with daily stressors that are present in their job. Raffety et al. (1997) presented an important point about the coping process. The point is that the process is one of some length. Coping can start with the anticipation of a stressful event and may continue for a long period after the event happens. Further, there have been few studies that focused on the entire coping process (Swartz and Stone, 1993). This stated, the focus of this research will be on the important issues of defining and identifying how to cope with stress that is common amongst people who work at a detention-based juvenile treatment facility.
CHAPTER III

METHODS

This project is an examination of stress that staff may experience while working at a juvenile detention center. The purpose of the research is identification of the specific stressors and understanding the coping process of detention center workers at a juvenile detention center in Michigan. It is hoped that the analysis of the research will give guidance to the worker and administrators regarding a better understanding of the stressors present, and will help them to be more successful in the performance of their jobs.

The research procedures included interviewing a sample of 12 women and men who are currently working three different shifts at a juvenile detention center, and have worked at the facility for at least six months. There was no control group. All the correction workers interviewed were asked a series of questions that are in the interview schedule (Appendix A). The questions for the interview schedule were derived from information in the literature review. All of the interviews were conducted in the same building at the detention center. Each interview lasted approximately one hour.

The research participants were randomly selected form the current staff at the detention center. Approximately 40 staff work three different shifts at this facility
One third of the staff at the facility were interviewed, making sure that each shift is represented in the research. Once the staff were randomly selected, they were all notified to ensure their consent to take part in this thesis research project. The risks to the worker were minimal. Specifically, the interview language was designed to have no biased or leading questions that could affect the worker. The worker was informed that the confidentiality of the data will be maintained at all times. The worker was given a consent form (Appendix B) to read before the start of the interview process. The only information that will be shared with the workers or the administrative staff will be that at the aggregate level. No personal identifiers were used to ensure that the workers will not receive any repercussions for taking part in this research project.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter contains a summary of the findings from the interviews. The findings are broken down by demographics, general stress questions, role ambiguity, personal safety, and the need for structure. After discussing each question in a section, an overall summary of the section will be provided. This, in turn, will be followed by a general discussion of these findings. The analysis of these findings, its relationship to the literature review, and concluding remarks will be addressed in the subsequent chapter.

Demographic Summary

The interviews for this research were conducted at a Michigan juvenile detention center. Twelve people participated in this project, with six female and six male detention workers being interviewed. The twelve respondents were randomly picked from the three different shifts at this facility, and there was an attempt to have two of each gender from the three different work shifts. Ten of the twelve people interviewed were Caucasian. There is a lack of diversity at this facility, with only one Multiracial person, and one Hispanic person among the staff. The age range of the twelve people interviewed was from twenty-three to forty-nine. The average age
of the respondents was thirty-one years old, with eight of the twelve respondents
between the ages of twenty-three and twenty-nine.

The education level of the respondents ranged from a high school diploma to
a bachelor's degree. Ninety-two percent of the respondents had at least taken some
college classes, with eight of the respondents having their bachelor's degree. Only
one of the respondents had not attended college. Half of the people interviewed were
married, half were single. Regarding length of employment at this facility, it ranged
from six months to 12 years. The majority of the people interviewed fell in the range
from six months to two and a half years. The average number of years at this facility
was four years and two months.

General Stress Questions

What Responsibilities Do You Have With Your Job?

Ninety-two percent of the respondents stated safety or security of the
detention center as their number one responsibility. As one respondent put it, "safety
and security is our number one priority". All other responses had to do with the day­
to-day functions of the facility's different shifts and the different staff duties. One
respondent stated that some staff have a lot of different responsibilities: "It is harder
on third shift, a lot of reorganizing, putting things in order and getting them in order
for the next day. Laundry, 1 1/2 hours supervised group in the mornings, normally
eight kids"
How Do You Perceive Your Job in Terms of Importance to This Detention Center?

There was an interesting pattern in the respondents' answers to this question. Five of the workers focussed on their jobs in terms of importance to the agency. These five respondents focussed on how their jobs helped the staff or detained juveniles by providing them with some treatment or a safe environment. Two of the respondents dealt with the issue of working third (the midnight) shift. They reported that "this is the most misunderstood shift" and "I think it is harder on third shift". These two respondents focussed more specifically on the importance of different shifts. Another five respondents did mention that they did not think the administration viewed their jobs as important.

I Am Interested in How You Define Stress Both Personally and Professionally

Four of the respondents stated that their definitions of stress would combine both the personal and the professional, that they are one and the same. Two of the four stated that an increase in stress for them at work hampers their ability to handle things at home. All four respondents thought that stress was anything that interferes with top performance mentally or physically, such as poor communication, dealing with other's emotions, or anything that had to do with money.

Eight respondents separated and defined stress both personally and professionally. The definitions of personal stress given by these eight respondents were reported in specific and general terms. Personal stress was defined as: dealing
with anxiety, dealing with the unknown, too much to do and not enough time to do it, not being able to spend as much time with friends on the weekends, and having to do household chores. The definitions of professional stress demonstrated a pattern of administrative personnel as the cause of stress. Three of the eight pointed out that administration leads to their professional stress. One respondent reported that when administration is not in the building, then things are not as stressful. This idea of administrative personnel causing stress was directed at the issues of changing expectations of certain policies and staff. One respondent stated that, "One minute I am expected to supervise, and the next minute I am not allowed to answer the phone". Five respondents, who did not have supervisor responsibilities, defined professional stress in these key ways: not having enough time to get things done; other people not doing what they are supposed to be doing, and adhering to the professional standard that is emphasized, "You can't be yourself".

**Can You Think of Any Particular Times at Work When You Felt Under More Stress Than Usual? If so, Would You Please Tell Me About Those Situations or Events?**

Two patterns appeared from this question. The patterns of the most stressful events had to do with either the residents or staff at this facility. Four respondents stated that their most stressful time at work dealt with an interaction with the residents. Three stated that having to restrain residents was the most stressful, and one stated that when he was new he did not know all the rules and the residents "always take advantage of new staff". The other eight respondents said that their
most stressful work events had to do with the staff and relationships at this facility.
The stress had to do with poor communication between staff which led to others not being able to perform their job, not having enough staff to fill (so people have to stay late), and not knowing the staff at the facility. Two of these respondents experienced an event at the facility wherein a staff member abused a resident. Neither felt that the residents or other staff were supported by the administration.

**Section Summary**

A working definition of stress was created by the respondents who work at the juvenile detention center. Several stress researchers point out that it is important to have the respondents' working definition of stress when analyzing anything in stress research. The respondent's definitions were wide ranging, several had both a personal and professional definition of stress and four had a combined definition. There was a pattern shown that the respondents who had more of a supervisory role focussed more on the administrative personnel as a source of stress, but several others without supervisory responsibilities also mentioned the administrative staff as a source of stress.
Role Ambiguity

I Am Curious What is Expected of You By Your Supervisors During Your Normal Work Shift?

There were two patterns of responses to this question. Eight of the twelve respondents stated that safety and security of the staff and residents was the main thing that their supervisors expected of them. The other four respondents did not mention safety and security specifically, but rather focused on setting the tone at detention and maintaining a professional attitude while at work.

Also, What Do You Expect of Yourself During Your Normal Work Shift?

When the respondents were asked what they expected of themselves during their work shift, 75% stated that being fair and honest with the kids and staff at the facility was their main expectation. The other 25% focused more on tasks that need to be completed for the next day, and did not mention the staff or the kids at the detention facility when it came to their job expectations of themselves.

In Addition, What is Expected of You During Crisis Situations?

Three of the twelve respondents focused on the fact that they had been at this facility for a significant time, over four years, and that people look to them during crisis situations. For example, when a resident needs to be physically managed, the more experienced staff would take a leadership role, and define how the newer staff
should assist in managing the out of control resident. The other nine respondents
focused on the idea of keeping the staff and residents safe, and to be as helpful with
each other as possible. There was an overwhelming sense that the respondents really
come together and support each other in times of crisis. They did see the crisis as
being a time when a kid at the detention center needs to be physically managed.

Are There Times When You Are Unsure or Unclear About What It Is You Are
Expected to Do?

Seventy-five percent of the respondents stated that there are times when they
are unsure about what is expected of them. The things that were stated as most
confusing came from not knowing all the detention center policies as a new worker.
Further, policies at this facility change from time to time, and as one respondent
stated:

Something like rules tend to change. I went to a training about the fine lines
that can go either way at our facility. When I started, I thought a lot more
black and white with the rules, and now there are a lot of grey areas. Grey
areas cause stress. I want to know the correct way things are done. All staff
seem to be trained a different way.

The other 25% of the respondents stated they were unsure of expectations. Similarly,
two of these workers stated that in general they were not unsure about expectations,
but if they were unclear they would ask a supervisor.
Have You Ever Experienced Role Confusion, and to What Degree Has it Influenced Your Work?

Fifty-eight percent of the respondents stated that they do not experience role confusion. The reasons given ranged from being a worker at the facility for such a long time that they know the rules, to more specific reasons why they do not experience confusion. One female respondent made the statement that "roles around here are very specific, and a lot of jobs at the facility are sex oriented. The males do the physical labor and the females do the paperwork." For example, one worker stated that "there was a situation at night where a male staff was approached to help with a situation, where I could have done the same job." This respondent was asked why she allowed her male supervisors to let this happen, and she stated that this must be the way it is at this facility.

Are You Involved in Policy Decision Making?

All but two respondents stated that they had no involvement in policy decision making at their facility. One of the two who reported having input in policy decision making only stated "at times", but provided no examples of specific times that they were directly involved with change.

When You are Called Upon to Make Decisions, Does the Administration Support Your Decisions?

Ninety-two percent of the respondents stated that the administrative staff
supports the decisions of staff at the facility. The other 8% stated that they have been supportive in the past, but that there have been specific major occurrences at the facility where the administration has not been supportive. One staff also stated that "they do support you in the moment, but normally don't in retrospect later."

**How Does the Administration's Support or Lack of Support, Affect Further Decisions That You Make?**

All of the respondents stated that support from the administrative personnel does make them comfortable and confident in further decisions. Also it was stated that the "administration puts people in positions to make decisions so they should be supportive." Three of the respondents stated that the administrative personnel does not always get back to them in a timely manner in discussing critical decisions that have been made.

**Section Summary**

The respondents answered the question of "What is expected of you by your supervisors" similarly to the first question in the previous section. The respondents stated that safety and security is the number one expectation of someone working at a juvenile detention center. However, when asked what they expected of themselves while at work, the respondents did not focus on the security issues of the detention facility, but rather on human nature and fairness. In fact, 75% of the respondents stated that being fair to the residents and staff was their number one expectation of
themselves.

When the respondents were asked if they experienced role confusion, only 42% responded affirmatively. The major reason for confusion focused on changing policies and being a new worker at the facility. When the respondents were asked if they were involved with policy decision making, the response was overwhelmingly "No". The few that reported being involved with policy decision making stated it was only for minor decisions or they had to go about changing things indirectly.

The answers to the last two questions regarding administrative support of the detention staff seemed contradictory to the previous section in this research. The respondents overwhelmingly (92%) stated that the administration supported their decisions, which made the respondents feel comfortable and confident in further decision making. However, there were comments by at least 25% of the respondents that suggested administrative support was not always present or consistent.

Personal Safety

Are You Ever the Only Worker During Your Shift?

Fifty-eight percent of the respondents stated that they are the only worker on their shift, where as 42% stated they were never the only worker during their shift. No definite pattern was established from the respondents answering this question.
What Are Your Thoughts on Working Alone?

First, only 58% of the respondents could answer this question, since they were the only ones to report working alone during their shifts. There was a concern about technology and two other noticeable patterns regarding working alone were identified. The first pattern focused on the floor plan, and distance from other staff. Specifically, several (over 50%) of the respondents focused on the gymnasium as a place that weakens security for the detention staff. One respondent stated:

I feel there is a breach of security in the gym. We take precautions with the radios. I remember another staff was attacked in the gym and did have a quick response. Violent situations happen in a few seconds and with the floor plan our response time is not quick enough.

Another respondent stated that they "felt most threatened in the gym because help was further away".

The second pattern focussed on the point that when you are the only worker you need to be more alert of situational dynamics and know where your resources are in the facility if you need someone to help. The other concern of two of the respondents focused on the use of technology to provide safety. Statements focussed on how radios do not always work, with one respondent stating that "Radios give you a false sense of security because they are not working properly".
Have You Ever Encountered Violent Situations on Your Shift? The Violence Could Be Verbal, Physical, or Implied. A) How Often? B) And Are Workers Ever Injured?

All of the respondents, regardless of demographics, stated that verbal, implied, and physical violence do occur at the detention facility. Further, it was stated that workers are rarely injured, and when injuries do occur they are minor things like bruises and skin abrasions. The categories of questions regarding violence demonstrated several patterns. Among the three shifts, it was the first and second shifts that experienced more of the three types of violence. The third shift respondents, as a group, reported that violence rarely occurred on their shift. All of their answers to the physical violence were from almost never to rarely, this was also stated about the verbal and implied violence. One respondent who works third shift stated that these types of violence "happen more on second shift", and only one third shift respondent stated that some type of violence does regularly occur, which was implied violence.

The first and second shift staff viewed all three types of violence as occurring at their facility. There was no difference in reporting among the first and second shifts regarding the violence. The pattern that did arise focussed on the women's and men's perspective on how much violence was happening at the facility. The women and men workers both reported a wide range of physical and verbal violence, reporting it occurring from a continual basis to rarely. The significant differences in responses did occur in the implied violence category. The pattern that developed was
that the men reported that implied violence either happened daily or at least once a week. Over 70% of the men interviewed stated that implied violence happens daily. The women workers did not give the same response to the implied violence category. Their answers ranged from two to three times a year to four times a month. However, 50% of the women respondents did state that this is the category of violence that does happen the most.

How Do You Professionally Address Violent Situations?

Two patterns developed when respondents were asked how they professionally address violent situations. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents focussed on how the staff processes violent situations after they occur, and 33% focussed on the violent situation itself. The respondents that focussed on the violent situation itself did not state specific ways or policies on how to address such situations. However, it was presented that staff do have the necessary training to handle violent situations. The other respondents stated that deescalation and avoiding the physical confrontation was important. One staff stated that the goal is to "reduce to non-violent, and that to lose or concede is the best way out sometimes".

The second pattern focussed on how the respondents process violent situations after they occur. There was no policy stated that respondents have to process situations, but 88% stated that the staff process violent situations. The processing of violent situations was viewed as a time for staff to de-escalate, and to
evaluate the situation to see what can be learned. In fact, one staff member stated that "after a violent situation is over, staff have to take a break to debrief, then talk about what went well and what did not. "We try to figure out if situation could have been prevented." Another staff member said, "Staff do a good job of processing it with the staff that are on shift, and I always talk about it, that helps me".

**How Do You Personally Cope With Violent Situations?**

Two patterns developed from the question of personally coping with violent situations. The first was that over 60% of the respondents cope with the violence easily. Most of these respondents stated that this violence does not really affect them personally. Several staff responded by saying that kids are just kids. One staff stated specifically that "I chalk it up as kids are kids. Be happy that I or no one else gets hurt, and that it is just part of the job." Another staff stated the way they cope is that "I just think I don't take it personally. Resident in a bad frame of mind not talking or thinking rationally. Everybody makes bad choices, and we give them the opportunities to correct them".

The second pattern did demonstrate that one group of workers is more effected by, and has a more difficult time coping with, the violence on the job. The group most affected by the violence was four female workers. All four stated that they did have a difficult time coping with the violence. Specifically, the constant repetition of the events of the day stayed with them longer as they hashed them out in
Do You Think That Your Health or Safety Are at Risk Because of Your Work?

Regardless of demographics, all of the respondents stated that either their health or safety was at risk. All of the respondents except for two stated that it was their health that they were most concerned about from working at a detention center. The major pattern that developed from the responses was the concern of blood borne pathogens and general sicknesses. One staff stated that "I am not sure what these kids are carrying around", and another staff stated that, "the job is stress to the body, tough to deal with some issues, and not taking things home personally helps." One other staff stated that "I have never been more sick in my life than from working at the detention center. Stress: System is down, and there are so many of the kids getting sick."

What Do You Find Most Beneficial or Helpful to You Regarding Safety Issues?

Over 80% of the respondents stated that it was the knowledgeable, concerned, and trained staff that made them feel the most safe at the facility. It was also pointed out that the crisis prevention intervention training were also very important. It was interesting to note that only two of the respondents interviewed focussed on mechanical measures like cameras and electric doors that made them feel safer in the facility. However, one of these two respondents stated in this
interview that the cameras at the facility were currently not working.

Section Summary

Overall, the respondents gave the impression to this researcher that they work in a safe facility. There were no war stories about how staff or residents were severely injured at the facility. The respondents did all agree that violence does occur at the juvenile detention center. Differences were in the amounts of violence reported, with the first and second shifts reporting the most violence. This researcher was impressed by the lack of a non-correctional "macho attitude" when the respondents had to deal with violent residents.

Need for Structure

You Stated You Work _______ Shift. In a Normal Shift, How Many Other Staff Work on Your Shift?

The three different shifts have different numbers of people on each shift. There was a consensus among third shift staff that only three staff work the third shift. The second shift staff stated that there are seven to 10 staff, and the first shift workers stated that there were anywhere from three to 10 staff on first shift. This variance has to do with weekend staffing, and the inclusion of teaching staff during the week.
Do You Think That This is an Appropriate Number of Staff For Your Shift?

The researcher received an overwhelming "NO" from all the staff but one second shift worker.

Why or Why Not?

The reasons for why there is not an appropriate amount of staff differed among the shifts. The third shift respondents focussed on the emergency aspect of only having three staff on shift whereas the other shifts focussed on the daily functions of the facility. Several examples were given that demonstrated that only having three staff on this shift was seen as not appropriate. In fact, all the third shift respondents referred to a hypothetical fire situation. One staff stated:

In a fire situation, if we have to get the kids outside, [it is] not appropriate for three staff to manage forty kids. If a kid snuck a lighter into detention, he could set his trash on fire, in which case the detention center would have to evacuate. Then others could be waiting outside with a hole in the fence and they could take off.

Another third shift respondent agreed by stating in case of a fire, "we have to take the kids out back, and they could plan an escape, and beat the crap out of us and could escape".

The first and second shift respondents focussed less on emergency issues and more on duties within the building. The second shift respondents stated that running the control panel when it gets busy is difficult, and that intakes cause a problem with staff not getting their breaks, both due to not enough workers. The first shift
respondents focussed on the idea that if there were an additional staff member that they could at least do an adequate job, but as it is now, it is "difficult just to get another staff to help diffuse a situation".

**Do You See Your Work as Mostly Treatment, Custody Focused, or Both?**

A majority of the respondents thought that their work was mostly custody, with only four respondents stating that their work was both treatment and custody. None of the respondents saw their job as strictly treatment oriented.

**Do You Think That This Focus is Appropriate? A) Benefits of the Focus? B) Problems With This Focus?**

The four respondents who thought that both treatment and custody were a part of their jobs thought that was an appropriate focus in detention. The respondents that saw custody as their job thought custody was an appropriate focus for detention. One of the benefits described, regardless of the theoretical focus, was the ability to deal with the two to six day detained resident. Over 60% of the staff, mostly second and first shift workers, thought that the custody focus helped with moving residents in and out of the facility.

An interesting split in responses between the male and female workers developed out of this question. The problem that all of the female workers stated described the lack of individual treatment for the juveniles; specifically for those that are at the detention center for longer periods. One staff stated that, "there are wasted
opportunities to help kids sitting here for months awaiting placement". Another staff stated, "the kids you start to see as a real person, not just a therapist or a care taker". Fifty percent of the male staff saw the transition of residents as one of the major problems, and that the small time offenders should not be detained. One of the male staff also thought there was no problem with the custody focus.

Do You Think This Focus is Helpful to Staff in Their Daily Responsibilities?

Three respondents thought that the custody focus at the facility did not help staff in their daily functions. They reasoned there were two foci, and having different foci in the facility makes it hard for staff. It was also pointed out by these three that the different foci, within different units of the facility, can make work expectations and performance difficult. The other nine respondents reported that the focus did help staff in their daily functioning.

What Kind of Changes Would You Like to See Happen Regarding This Focus?

When the respondents were asked what kinds of changes they would like to see regarding the focus at the facility, two responses were given. The first response was a need for more consistency among the staff who worked at the detention center. It was stated that lack of consistency is not helpful when staff are doing different things. One staff concluded, "I think that adherence to written rules versus the verbal expectations would help staff do their job". The second response focussed on having
residents that are at the facility for longer periods of time get counseling. Several respondents thought more treatment units would be helpful. Regarding the length of stay for individual juveniles, several of the staff thought that there was not a need for short stays, but that longer stays might teach detained kids a lesson.

Section Summary.

First, the respondents seem unclear on what focus is operating at their detention center. The majority stated that the focus was custody, with 34% stating that the focus of the facility was both custody and treatment. All of the respondents thought that there needed to be change in the detention center focus. The major changes in the focus were more consistency among staff, and doing more treatment with residents that were detained for lengthy stays. Regardless of the focus of the facility, all of the respondents thought that there needed to be additional staff on each of the shifts. The reasons for more staff ranged from just getting the basic work duties completed and helping out with intakes, to having to deal with emergencies at the facility.

The last question asked if there was anything the respondents would like to add. Two of the respondents had nothing else to add at the end of the interviews. The other ten respondents' answers to this question focused on different areas that could help them do their job better, which was normally the cause of most of their stress experienced from working at the facility. The administrative staff, lack of
communication, and the need for more staff were the three responses given to the final question. The respondents seemed concerned with not having a good working relationship with the administrative staff. One respondent did have a different concern to add at the end of the interview. The respondent thought that the radios at the facility caused them stress, specifically that, "if we have radios, then they should work".

Overall Summary

First and foremost, the researcher learned that being treated fairly, with a certain touch of humanness and respect, was particularly important to the respondents interviewed. The major, identifiable stressor in the research is the way that the staff are treated. The majority of the respondents were very concerned with their working relationship with the administrative team at this facility. It must be noted that the majority of the respondents' definitions of stress focussed on some aspect that related to the administrative staff. However, in the section on role ambiguity, over 90% of the staff agreed that at some time administration did support the decisions they made, which made them feel more confident in conducting their work duties.

Several things impressed this researcher regarding the respondents who worked at this detention center. First, only a few of the respondents mentioned money as a stressor in their job, and only three respondents stated any type of violence as a significant stressor. In fact, in the section on personal safety, none of
the staff reported being scared at work or even that uncomfortable about dealing with violent situations. The majority of the respondents thought that they did not take violence personally, but that kids are kids, and that the respondents are there to help the residents in violent situations.

The second thing that was impressive was the stated number one goal at their job: 'Safety and Security' was the number one response to what they thought their primary job duty entailed. Further, the majority of the staff stated that it was the dedicated and concerned staff of this facility that made the other staff feel so safe. It was not technological advances like radios, cameras, and electronic doors that made staff feel safe.

It was interesting the way the respondents tended to treat the residents in their care. The researcher did not receive one answer that they disliked the kids or enjoyed their authority, but rather the respondents focussed on the care that was provided. Several of the staff felt there should be more treatment in a custody oriented facility, especially for the residents who have extended stays should also receive treatment.

In all, the researcher learned that detention center workers care about the way their co-workers, the juveniles, and themselves are treated. The primary reason for staff stress is when someone interferes with the care and concern that the workers at this facility try to provide on a daily basis.
CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Two central findings will be discussed, how supervisors' roles and relationships with the administrative personnel affect the workers, and how the workers cope with events at the facility. The findings will then be related to the literature review on stress and coping. The limitations of the research and concluding remarks will be addressed at the end of this chapter.

The job position that experienced the most stress at the detention center was the role of the supervisor. Not only did the regular supervisors experience increased stress, but also those that fill-in for the supervisors. The respondents were asked to give a definition of professional stress at the facility, and those with supervisor responsibilities reported more stress. The stress ranged from the constant changing of the "rules", to lack of input on policies, to problems with the administrative personnel. It should also be noted that it was the respondents with supervisory responsibilities that had the most difficult time coping with events that happened at the detention center. This supervisor position experiencing more stress related to the concept of role ambiguity, defined earlier as 'employees uncertain of their duties and what their responsibilities are, and how they go about performing them'. The fill-in supervisors not only have their own duties, but then have to take on the role of...
supervising as well. One respondent stated that "one minute I am expected to supervise, and the next minute [when not the acting supervisor] I am not allowed to answer the phone". Another respondent focussed on this by listing all of the different tasks that they have to do during their shift as well as assuming the responsibilities of the supervisor. The researcher believes that the role of the supervisor creates role ambiguity, which leads to role and job overload, which then leads to a stressed workforce.

The most identifiable stressor reported was the relationships between the respondents and the administrative personnel. It is important to note that regardless of the question presented in the first section of this research, there was a constant pattern of little support of the staff from the administrative personnel. Specifically, it was the issue of not being treated fairly by administrative personnel. Respondents stated that when there was discussion about more staff breaks or pay scale increases, the administration ignores these feelings which makes the staff feel unimportant. One staff stated that, "I am a dime a dozen". Another staff stated, "If the administration is in a good mood then you get some gratification". One staff stated that, "When the administrative staff are not in the building is when I experience the least amount of stress". Three of the respondents focussed on the fact that administrative personnel does not get back to them in a timely manner on important decisions. In fact, there was such a delay in some cases that it tended to cause self doubt or lead to people distancing themselves from the administrators.
The research suggested that administrative personnel was the major stressor at this detention facility, and that the relationships between staff and administrators were poor. This being stated, there is a major contradiction that was apparent in the second section of the research. In response to the question, "When you are called upon to make decisions does the administration support your decisions?" Ninety-two percent of the respondents stated that the administration supported their decisions which made them feel confident in further decision making. Further, in the general stress category of questions over 50% stated that administration did not think the respondent's jobs were important, and over 30% included administration in their professional definitions of stress. However, all of these respondents stated that the administrative personnel have supported their decisions at the facility. Nevertheless, the respondents' major focus on administrative personnel causing stress, regardless of the contradiction, leads this researcher to think that any positive change from the administrators towards the staff would relieve a majority of the stress.

Coping with situations at the detention center was reported to be handled easily by 60% of the respondents. As previously stated, there was a group of female workers who had a more difficult time coping with the stress experienced in detention. It was the day to day situations, including violence, with which workers had a hard time coping. Sixty-seven percent of the female respondents stated that they had a difficult time coping, and it was the constant rehashing of the days events that slowed the coping process. The role of the supervisor should be noted here as all
of these female workers assume supervisor roles. The researcher thinks that the coping process is slowed down specifically by the workers having to take on the different roles in the facility, which leads to exposure to more stress, which in turn could be correlated with a more difficult time coping with situations. It was actually stated by 75% of these female workers that when they are the supervisors they tend to focus on events longer than if they are not the supervisor at the time of difficult situations. This researcher thinks that in juvenile corrections there is a link between an increase in the difficulty of coping when there is an increase of roles and duties placed upon the worker.

Relevance to the Literature

When comparing this research to the broader literature on stress and coping many similarities and differences arise. Specifically, role ambiguity and the identification of administrators as one of the major sources of stress was also reported in the literature. Poole and Regoli (1980) examined stress, and found that role ambiguity was a significant source of stress in corrections. Myers (1996) stated that of three major stressors that detention workers identified, one was "communication with the administration of the facility"(p. 3). Rosefield (1983) focussed on four of the most significant categories of stressors that affect the corrections workers. One of the major categories of stressors was role definition for the corrections officer, where what is exactly expected of them was seen as a major stressor. Cheek and Miller
(1983) combined the role ambiguity of managers and administrative relationships with the front line workers; these were two areas that produced a lot of stress for the correctional worker. It was proposed that the "lack of recognition and support of correctional officers in the managerial aspect of their role generates a lot of stress" (Cheek and Miller, 1983, p. 11). Cheek and Miller's research continued to support administration as a significant source of stress, as demonstrated in this research project, that rules are created by those in higher positions, and role conflict can occur because "officers feel that they have no power to change poor impractical rules" (p. 13).

As stated in the analysis of the findings, coping with events that occur at a juvenile detention center can be difficult and take some time. It was shown in this research that a specific group of workers had a difficult time coping. The research showed that this group experienced a longer time period to cope, especially when they were the supervisor. The literature on coping similarly points out that coping can be a process of some length. As stated in the literature review, Raffety and his colleagues (1997) pointed out that the coping process is normally one of some length. The coping process can start with the anticipation of a stressful event and may continue long after the event has happened. Dewe (1989) also supports the idea that coping is a lengthy process by hypothesizing that the coping starts with the appraisal of stressors. He states that "the way in which an individual copes appears to be central to providing meaning and shaping stressful experiences" (Dewe, p. 1009),
which in this research project would be assuming the role of supervisor.

Two other areas examined in this research project and in the literature review are the need for structure and personal safety. Specifically, these two categories were stated as major stressors by Rosefield (1983). The literature points out the need for structure, and that understaffing and overcrowding are main issues that cause stressful working conditions. It was similarly reported in the current research project that all of the staff except one felt that there was a need for more staff on all of the shifts at the detention center.

Regarding personal safety (specifically violence against people who work in corrections), the literature points out that violence is seen as a major stressor in corrections and the human service fields (Leather, Cox, and Farnsworth, 1990, and Wykes and Whittington, 1991). Violence, in the current research project, was identified as something that does occur at the detention facility. However, the reporting of violence was minimal compared to the broader correctional literature. Further, violence was not seen as one of the major stressors that affects the worker.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations in this current research. First, there were several similar responses to some of the major questions proposed to the respondents. The questions were "What responsibilities do you have with your job?", and "What is expected of you by your supervisors during your normal work shift?". Over 85% of
the respondents stated that 'Safety and Security' was their number one responsibility. These answers were stated immediately, making the researcher think that this was policy being stated, not the respondents' true opinions. Further, even with probing, the answers did not change.

A second limitation relates to demographics. Only two non-caucasian individuals work at this detention center. The responses to the stress and coping questions takes on the viewpoint primarily of Caucasian women and men. This is a serious limitation for this research, but more importantly brings up the question as to 'why' there are so few non-Caucasian workers at this juvenile detention center.

The third limitation to this research is the size of the facility that was examined. The facility was only a 40 bed juvenile detention center in a rural mid-west county. The research does not identify stressors or coping skills that much larger juvenile detention centers must address. However, it is a good microcosm of the issues that detention center staff must deal with daily.

A fourth limitation has to do with the time of day the interview took place. The researcher wanted the interview to be as convenient to the respondent as possible, so the respondent was able to choose when the interview occurred. Even though the interviews occurred at the same place, they did not occur at the same time of day. Several of the respondents chose to be interviewed before their shift started, and the majority chose to be interviewed after their shift. This could have caused a dramatic difference in the answers that were reported. It is likely that the respondents
may have reported more stress following their shift then prior to their shift, particularly if they had a stressful day at work.

Concluding Remarks

This researcher has several suggestions for future research in this area. The researcher thinks that conducting this same qualitative research, using the same interview schedule, at a larger juvenile detention center is important. There could be a comparison or cross references that could be made between both detention centers to see if the identifiable stressors or coping processes would be similar or different. Also, one may consider conducting this similar research at the same size center, but in a more urban area, to see if differences might occur. The researcher thinks that these suggestions are important next steps for future research.

This researcher thinks that this current project has impacted the field of juvenile corrections. First, there is limited literature available. Several stress researchers in the field of corrections think that there is an absolute dearth of information available. This research project is a needed addition to the area of stress and coping research that detention center workers experience. It is unfortunate, but most of the stress research that has occurred has been in the field of adult corrections. Most importantly, this project has impacted this area, I hope, by being a guide for juvenile correction workers. There are many detention center workers that experience similar day to day struggles from working with detained juveniles. It is
the researcher’s hope that this may serve as a guide to help detention center workers identify stressors and cope effectively.
Appendix A

Interview Schedule
Thank you for taking the time to be a part of this research project. This project will focus on stress issues that can occur at correctional facilities. I want you to know that your answers are very important to me and they will be kept confidential.

I would like to start the interview by asking you some background questions.

1) Gender

2) Race and Ethnicity

3) Date of birth

4) Education level

5) Marital status

6) Years of employment in juvenile justice system

7) Have you had jobs working with juveniles in different settings?

8) How long have you worked at this facility?

9) What shift do you work?
   a) Is this your preferred shift?

I would now like to ask you some general questions about your job.

(Category I: General stress questions)

1) What responsibilities do you have with your job?

2) How do you perceive your job in terms of importance to this detention center?

3) I am interested in how you define stress both personally and professionally.

4) Can you think of any particular times at work when you felt under more stress than usual?
   a) Would you please tell me about those situations or events.

Now I would like to ask you more specific questions about your work responsibilities.
(Category II: Role Ambiguity)

1) I am curious, what is expected of you by your supervisors during your normal work shift?

2) Also, what do you expect of yourself during your normal work shift?

3) In addition, what is expected of you during crisis situations?

4) Are there times when you are unsure or unclear about what it is you are expected to do?

5) Some workers in juvenile detention facilities experience role ambiguity. A definition would be that “in some jobs, employees are uncertain about what their duties and responsibilities are and or how they should go about performing them. This uncertainty is called ambiguity [or role confusion]” (Jex et al. 1197, p. 231).

6) Have you ever experienced role confusion, and to what degree has it influenced your work?

7) Are you involved in policy decision making?

8) When you are called upon to make decisions, does the administration support your decisions.

9) How does the administrations’ support or lack of support, affect further decisions that you make?

(Category III: Personal Safety)

1) Are you ever the only worker during your shift?

2) What are your thoughts on working alone?

3) Have you ever encountered violent situations on your shift? The violence could be verbal, physical, or implied.
   
a) How often?

   b) And are workers ever injured?

4) How do you professionally address violent situations?
5) How do you personally cope with violent situations?

6) Do you think that your health or safety are at risk because of your work?

7) What do you find most beneficial or helpful to you regarding safety issues?

(Category IV: Need for structure)

1) You stated you work _____ shift. In a normal shift, how many other staff work on your shift?

2) Do you think that this is an appropriate number of staff for your shift?

3) Why or Why not?

4) Do you see your work as mostly treatment, custody focused, or both?

5) Do you think this focus is appropriate?

   a) Benefits of this focus?

   b) Problems with this focus

6) Do you think this focus is helpful to staff in their daily responsibilities?

7) What kind of changes would you like to see happen regarding this focus?

I would like to ask you one final question for the interview.

1) Is there anything else you would like to add?
Appendix B

Protocol Clearance From the Human Subjects
Institutional Review Board
Date: 23 November 1998

To: Susan Caulfield, Principal Investigator
Matthew Schmid, Student Investigator for thesis

From: Sylvia Culp, Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 98-10-06

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "Stress at a Juvenile Detention Center: Identifying Stressors and Examining the Coping Process" has been approved under the exempt category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: 23 November 1999
BIBLIOGRAPHY


patterns, and psychosocial variables. Work and Stress, 3(1), 21-32.


