WHAT HELPS, HINDERS AND MIGHT HELP POLICE OFFICERS

MAINTAIN A BROAD IDENTITY

by

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Abstract

The researcher used the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) to examine what helps, hinders, and might help police officers to maintain a broad identity. For this study, broad identity refers to enjoying a range of occupational, social, and personal roles. The findings contribute to work-life balance literature with an identification of what might help officers to maintain balance. Twenty-one police officers from across Canada and the United States were interviewed to explore their perspective as to what factors impacted their ability to maintain multiple life roles. Analysis of participant responses resulted in the identification of 400 critical incidents, 221 helping, 126 hindering, and 53 wish list items, forming 23 categories. Implications for future research are discussed. Implications for counselling and police organizational practices include supporting police and their families in fortifying other life roles and managing role conflicts.
Preface

This dissertation is the original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Stephanie M. Conn. The interviews discussed in Chapters 3-5 were covered by UBC Ethics Certificate number H14-00501, under the project title ECIT Study of Police Identity.
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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation study to my dad, Don Fairrel. Dad, you were the inspiration for this study. I always admired your dedication to such a noble profession. You showed me the meaning of taking pride and having purpose in your work. Watching you led me down a similar path. I am glad we were able to share our passion for policing. I also appreciate and miss your constant encouragement for my educational goals. The memory of your words continues to inspire and encourage me now. I miss and love you beyond words.
Chapter 1: Introduction

“How can you be commanding, ordering, and directing by day- hiding your emotions, hiding that you are afraid . . . and then open the door and say ‘Hi, Honey. I’m home’?” – Beverly J. Anderson, Ph.D., Director, Metropolitan Police Employee Assistance Program (Kirschman, 1997. p. 3).

As demonstrated by the preceding quote, the transition from the expectations of a work situation and the expectations in a personal situation can be challenging for police officers (Gilmartin, 2002; Kirschman, 1997; Paton, Violanti, Burke, & Gehrke, 2009). Some forms of employment entail the embodiment of the position. Policing is one profession where what one does for work oftentimes becomes what one is. Transition from work to home is a daily event that, over time, may cease to take place. Becoming a police officer affects how the officer sees him or herself, and how family, friends, neighbours and society, as a whole, view the person. Some police officers’ initiations into the profession require swearing to an oath that includes a clause stating that one is a police officer 24/7, making it even more challenging to separate the self from the work.

Problem

The inability to separate the work from the worker may have negative consequences. Research indicates that police officers tend to narrow their sense of identity when they acquire the police officer role (Gilmartin, 2002; Paton, et al., 2009). This tendency can be problematic, as it detracts from officers’ coping resources. The literature cites two primary ways coping is compromised: 1) the reduction of multiple identity roles diminishes the officers’ support system and 2) it creates dependence on the singular police role for coping (Gilmartin, 2002; Paton, et. al.)
Police officers who solely rely on their police officer role likely find their support systems are reduced to one location, their police network. If a police officer disengages from the police role, this support system may become attenuated. Additionally, following critical police events police officers are oftentimes prohibited from discussing their experience with other police officers due to an ongoing investigation. This leaves them without any support system, if another one is not in place. Sole dependence on the police role to cope may lead to restricting consideration of alternative solutions to problems (Gilmartin, 2002; Thoits, 1986, 2003). It is also hazardous since police officers do not have autonomous control of their roles as police officers. Police work, and consequently the police role, is influenced by police agency administrators, policies, procedures, laws, and public perception and opinions. Having their identity invested in a role they do not control can create a host of problems such as depression, anxiety, and burnout (Violanti, 1997). For instance, a police officer may believe that his or her role as a police officer is to “fight crime”. This perception may clash with the general public opinion that the police role is to “protect and serve”. The mismatch between these two role expectations may create more distress for an officer whose identity is largely comprised of the police role. This issue becomes even more troublesome when officers leave the policing profession due to illness, retirement, or involuntary resignation. Research has indicated that suicides occur following the disengagement from policing (Violanti, 1995). One of the most vulnerable times in a police career for suicide is nearing retirement or within a year or two of retirement (Badge of Life, 2008). Making matters worse, police officers are 8.3 times more likely to die by suicide than homicide and suicide is 3.1 times more likely than death by a work-related accident (Violanti, Vena, Marshall & Petralia, 1996). Narrowing one’s sources of identification can also have grave consequences for the police family. Police have been known
to attempt to solve family problems in the manner they would solve police matters (Kirschman, 1997). Recent research on police families has indicated that police wives felt the family was being “policed” by the police officer (Thompson, 2012).

**Rationale for the Study**

It is important to investigate the identity processes of police officers for various reasons. Exploring these processes would contribute to career theory since not much is known about the identity processes of police officers beyond the initial acquisition of the police role. Despite the documented tendency for police officers to narrow their identity roles, I believe there are some police officers who make choices to assume and maintain roles beyond the police role. Exploring these processes might also contribute to preventative or ongoing support initiatives offered by counsellors working with police officers and their families. Developing knowledge of police officers’ identity processes to inform preventative practices seems preferable to responding to the negative consequences that oftentimes occur as a result of the narrowing of identity roles.

**Multiple Identity Roles**

The impact of narrowing one’s social identities was first addressed by Robert Faris in his social isolation hypothesis (1934). Faris suggested persons who are cut off from intimate social relations for an extended period of time may experience mental disorders such as schizophrenia. However, the social isolation hypothesis was criticized on the grounds of ecological fallacy (Robinson, 1950), a failure to operationalize what constituted sufficient attenuation of interpersonal relationships to be deemed “isolation” and regarding the directionality of the
isolation: a matter of mental disorder creating isolation or isolation causing mental disorder (Clausen & Kohn, 1954).

Peggy Thoits elaborated on Faris’ (1934) social isolation hypothesis with the introduction of the *Identity Accumulation Theory* (1983). According to Thoits’ (1983, 1986, 2003) *Identity Accumulation Theory*, having multiple identity roles offers individuals purpose, meaning, and behavioural guidance. This position contrasts with traditional role theorists who have focused on the strain created by occupying multiple identity roles (Merton, 1957; Goode, 1960; Coser, 1974), especially regarding women who hold multiple roles (Gove, 1984; Menaghan, 1989). Thoits’ theory fits the *revisionist* perspective which holds that having multiple roles has a positive influence on mental health instead of a negative one. The benefit of having multiple roles has been found to be especially true of voluntary roles such as friend, neighbor, and churchgoer (Pavalko & Woodbury, 2000; Thoits, 1992). Voluntary roles are believed to make fewer demands on time, energy and commitment and to be purposefully acquired for the benefits they provide (Thoits, 2003). Thoits found that the more voluntary identities acquired across the two-year period, the more self-esteem and the greater the sense of control over life were enhanced (2003). Greater self-esteem and sense of control are personal resources believed to transcend role domains, offering global benefits to individuals. Self-esteem also increased over the two-year period with the increase in obligatory roles (Thoits, 2003).

Thoits has continued to expand on Identity Accumulation Theory, incorporating the concept of personal agency. Historically, the accumulation of identity roles was believed to be determined by social factors, referred to as *social causation* (Stryker, 1980; Stryker & Serpe, 1982; Thoits, 1986). Factors affecting these processes include race, ethnicity, gender, age, and social class. Thoits contends that the accumulation of identities is not merely what *happens* to
individuals in their social environments but is also the product of individuals exercising personal agency (2003). However, personal agency is not exempt from the influence of individual factors such as pre-existing physical and psychological characteristics. These pre-existing characteristics contribute to the subsequent acquisition of identity roles which, in turn, socially embed individuals more fully (Thoits, 2003). In sum, the unidirectional explanation of social context determining identity acquisition has been modified to include a bidirectional flow of influence between individuals (and their personal characteristics and agency) and their social environment.

Another argument regarding the benefit of multiple roles is Marks’ (1977) Energy-Expansion Theory. Marks contended that energy and time, important resources for human activities, were not fixed quantities that were ‘spent’ or ‘drained’ but were variable and capable of being ‘expanded.’ Performing multiple roles could generate energy instead of depleting it. Time could also be “expanded” by increasing efficiency with concurrent performance of multiple roles. In addition to expanding energy and time, enacting multiple roles is believed to facilitate the generation and transfer of resources across roles. (Lang & Lee, 2005).

Multiple identities may be organized in a “salience hierarchy” (Thoits, 1983). Placement in the hierarchy is a matter of identity salience, which refers to “the probability that an identity will be invoked across a variety of situations, or alternatively across persons in a given situation” (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 286). A salient identity is determined by the amount of commitment one has to this identity (Stryker & Serpe, 1982). Commitment, in turn, is “a function of the number, affective importance, and multiplexity (or overlap) of network ties that are formed by the person enacting the identity (Thoits, 1983). The degree of commitment is also referred to as “network embeddedness” (Stryker & Serpe, 1983). For some theorists, commitment is
evidenced by the amount of time and energy one devotes to enacting said identity (Goode, 1960; Coser, 1974; Sarbin, 1968) while others view commitment as defined by one’s subjective view of importance regarding the identity (Rosenberg, 1979; Marks, 1977). They argue that one may view an identity role as important but still lack the time to enact the role. Thoits (1983) contends that roles are differentially valued and those that are valued more will have more impact if they are lost or gained. Thoits also theorized that the more identities one has, commitment levels to any one identity will decrease. Conversely, the fewer identities one has, commitment levels to the remaining few identities will increase. The famous Zimbardo prison experiment is an example of this principle (Zimbardo, Haney, Banks, & Jaffe, 1973). Enacting the prisoner and guard roles produced strong self-definitions through the lack of alternative roles and the investment of time and energy in enacting their respective roles. Furthermore, the devalued role of prisoner did not diminish commitment to that role.

Identity salience has been shown to influence role choice behaviour and commitment to others with related identities (Callero, 1985; Stryker & Serpe, 1982). The link between identity and behaviours has been explained as owing to their shared meanings (Burke & Reitzes, 1981). Competing or conflicting identities will result in behaviour reflecting the identity with a greater commitment, a higher salience. This has been found in a large body of research on working women’s conflicting roles at work and home (Gove, 1984; Menaghan, 1989).

**Impact of Occupying Multiple Identity Roles.**

The relationship between multiple roles and psychological well-being is complex. The picture can vary considerably, depending on the relationship between various roles and the definition of commitment utilized: the amount of time and energy used, in terms of network-embeddedness / role overlap, or the subjective importance.
Thoits (1983) suggests the terms “isolated” and “integrated” refer to those with few identities and those with many identities, respectively. An isolated individual who loses an identity is believed to suffer more, as he or she has likely been very invested in the lost role and does not have another identity to turn to. An isolated person who acquires an identity should also have a stronger gain than an integrated person, since the isolated person will perceive a new sense of purpose.

When network–embeddedness / role overlap are considered for the isolated person and the integrated person, different pictures emerge. The isolated person who possesses few identities is less likely to have overlap between the few identities. The integrated person is more likely to have overlapping roles due to the presence of multiple identities. Therefore, when the integrated person sustains an identity loss, more identities are affected due to identity interdependence. On the other hand, if the integrated person acquires another identity, it will more likely become inter-connected with the existing network of roles, resulting in a multiplicative effect. In the context of interconnected network / role overlap, the isolated person will likely have dampened responses to losses and gains because the roles are not inter-connected and, therefore, operate independently. Subjective commitment to a given role is believed to increase when one or more of the following events occurs: spontaneous enjoyment of role performance, spontaneous loyalty to a role partner, anticipation of rewards from role enactment, or avoidance of punishment through role enactment (Marks, 1977).

Thoits (1991) contended that more distress is experienced when an event relates to a person’s identity. Thoits (1995) failed to find support for the identity-relevant stress hypothesis, stating that the quantitative methodology failed to capture the complexities of the relationship, including contextual nuances. Qualitative analysis of the interview data indicated chronic role
strains, the ordering of events, and the relief from certain roles impacted the psychological 
distress experienced by the participants in their roles. Thoits also speculated that prior research 
done by others on the hypothesis may have failed to produce support because the participants 
may have coped with their adverse circumstances by deemphasizing the importance of the 
identity that was affected. Thoits conjectured that only major events or changes would 
demonstrate a stronger impact on identity-relevant roles, referencing the work of George Brown 
and colleagues (Brown, Bifulco, & Harris, 1987; Brown & Harris, 1989).

Not all research has supported the benefit of having multiple roles. One very prominent 
argument for the negative impact of having multiple roles was Goode’s (1960) Theory of Role 
Strain. In stark contrast to the enhancing potential of multiple roles later proposed by the 
revisionist perspective, Goode relegated the positive potential of having multiple roles to the 
benefits individuals receive due to role performance by others. On a macro-level, role 
performances contribute to the needs of social institutions and, ultimately, to the survival of 
society. Goode characterized having multiple roles as “. . . a wide, distracting, and sometimes 
conflicting array of role obligations” (1960, p. 485). Possessing multiple roles was considered 
detrimental to individuals because they would have to find ways to manage their total role 
obligations by allocating limited energy and resources to meet these demands. Goode cited 
various measures taken by individuals to manage their demands such as compartmentalizing, 
delegating, eliminating role responsibilities, extending their roles so that they could use these 
added roles as justification for not meeting other demands (to a limit before it adds additional 
stress), and taking measures to prevent acquiring new roles. Furthermore, Goode proposed that 
individuals prioritize their roles into a hierarchy of importance, and consider prominent third 
parties, norms relating to adequate performance of a role, combining overlapping roles,
ascriptive statuses, and the detriment of deviating from role performance with a role partner. These considerations were believed to influence resource and energy allocation in role performances. For the next three decades following Goode’s (1960) theory of role strain research suggested that having multiple roles increases distress due to role conflict, overload, and difficulty managing multiple roles (Gersons, 1976; Kelling & Pate, 1975; Repetti, Matthews, & Waldron, 1989).

In the last three decades, additional research has explored the role enhancing perspective of multiple identities on well-being (Ahrens & Ryff, 2006; Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Lang & Lee, 2005). Research has investigated factors such as gender and age (Adelmann, 1994; Barnett & Hyde, 2001), sociodemographic and psychological moderators such as education, sense of control, and meaning (Ahrens & Riff, 2006), job stress (Lang & Lee, 2005), identity role importance and interconnectedness (Brook, Garcia, & Fleming, 2008). The evolving body of research offers support for the notion that having multiple identities generally promotes well-being.

It is also possible that beyond the strain encountered in managing multiple roles, there may be role partners that increase strain instead of reducing it. Not all role partners will be sources of support that ameliorate an individual’s strain. For instance, having an abusive partner that does not offer emotional or instrumental support paired with an unsupportive supervisor and a sick child who is not able to care for him/herself will not likely increase an individual’s coping capacity, but would more likely tax it. Specific to the policing profession, a large body of research indicates that police peer relations can actually be a source of stress through discrimination, hostility and cynicism (Brown, 1998; Harpold & Feenster, 2003; S. Martin, 1994; Miller, Forest & Jurik, 2003). Despite these negative relationships, there is also evidence that
supports that there are positive peer relations in policing (Conn & Butterfield, 2013; Violanti, 1997).

**Definition of Terms**

It is important to clarify some terms that may be unclear because they are often used interchangeably. First, identity must be distinguished from the concept of *self*. For the purposes of this study, I have adopted John Van Maanen’s definition of identity as used to describe the work identities of police officers. Van Maanen contends that these identities are influenced by various interactions found in police work environments. Accordingly, identity is defined as:

They [identities] are personal but thoroughly social and provisional in origin as well as maintenance. Strictly speaking, personal identity refers to those understandings of the self (by the self) that are internal but stable, transcending time and place. Yet they must rest on situated identities that are public, socially enacted, negotiated and bounded by space, time and circumstance (Van Maanen, 2010, p. 13-14).

Mead’s (1934) concept of *self* is adopted for the purposes of this study. Mead contended that the self is comprised of two parts: the “I” and the “me”. The “I” is the part of the self that is the knower and actor while the “me” is the perspective he or she takes about the “I” when taking the role of another (Owens, Robinson & Smith-Lovin, 2010; Sarbin, 1969). Accordingly, *identity* becomes a nested aspect of the *self* that provides a quality of unity and purpose (McAdams, 1995). *Identity role* refers to the meanings a person attributes to the self as an object in particular interactional settings (Burke & Tully, 1977). Some of these meanings extend to other situations and interactional settings. *Identity changes* signify changes in self-meanings (Burke, 2006). *Role boundary* is defined as that which “delimits the perimeter – and thereby the
scope – of a role” (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000, p. 474). *Role identification* refers to “when a role occupant defines himself or herself at least partly in terms of the role and its identity” (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000, p. 483). In summary, the self contains several identities, which give the self a sense of purpose. These identities, in turn, give the object-self meaning, which is determined in interactional settings (roles). There are varying degrees of identification with the role and variables scopes in each role.

**Assumptions and Limitations**

This study assumes a positive view of individuals as capable of taking a proactive, agentic approach to their health. An existential philosophy emphasizing choice and responsibility is offered in lieu of the belief that police officers are destined to be unwell due to their continuous exposure to traumatic events (Violanti, 2001). The study also assumes a positivist approach to the concept of identity, which assumes the continuity of an underlying self, according to the aforementioned definition offered by Van Maanen (2010).

This study is based on the my assumptions that I will encounter police officers who 1) maintain multiple identity roles and 2) manage stress better than others with narrow identities. It is also assumed that the maintenance of multiple identity roles will not be solely the product of the values of a younger generation of police officers. Participants will self-identify as maintaining a broad identity and that they are content with the number of their identity roles. No objective measures or secondary sources will be used to confirm the veracity of their claims. The qualitative nature of the study also renders the results incapable of being generalized. Additionally, I likely possess preconceived notions about what I expect to find when conducting the interviews, based upon my police experience. The potential for researcher bias will be mitigated by the credibility checks of the ECIT methodology. The purposive and snowball
method of recruiting participants must also be considered as a potential influence on the results of the study.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to investigate the personal, organizational, and social factors that help, hinder and might help police officers maintain a broad identity. For the purpose of this study, the term broad identity refers to enjoying a range of occupational, social, and personal roles. This definition was created by me in collaboration with my research supervisor, an expert in career issues. The literature is rich regarding the negative impact of role constriction and the benefits of maintaining multiple roles (Gilmartin, 2002; Thoits, 1983, 1986, 2003; Paton et al., 2009). Research has not explored how some police officers maintain multiple roles while others succumb to the tendency to constrict their roles. Identifying the personal and organizational factors that distinguish these two groups would have far-reaching benefits for hiring practices, training, and police agency policies. My findings will hopefully address this gap.

This study has both academic and practical aims. The study will hopefully deepen our understanding of how police officers make decisions that assist them in managing multiple identity roles. To date, there are no known theories or studies on the accumulation and maintenance of identity roles in the policing profession. This study would begin to build this knowledge base for future research to build upon. This knowledge base, in turn, could lend itself to practical applications in the policing and counselling professions. The study will benefit the policing profession specifically, and helping professions generally, by generating strategies to promote role retention or expansion. The findings will inform police agencies in the delivery of proactive education, supervision, and practices. They may also have implications for pre-employment screening, academy training, on-going training and supervision. The findings may
also inform counsellors working with this population to strengthen coping mechanisms. They will also aid police officers in adopting behaviours that contribute to the retention and expansion of multiple identity roles and, thereby, promote their coping.

The study is socially significant as it examines a process that has been linked to various factors of resiliency: social support, purpose, and flexible thinking (Charney & Southwick, 2012). Having a broad identity is believed to promote various sources of social support and purpose and contribute to flexible thinking by being active in various contexts. The purpose of this study was to illuminate the factors that contribute to and detract from maintaining a broad identity. It was also hoped that participants would offer suggestions for what might help them to maintain a broad identity if it were available to them. Therefore, the research question is What helps, hinders and might help police officers to maintain a broad identity? The Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Maglio, 2009; Flanagan, 1954) was chosen to answer this question because it allowed me both the structure to systematically investigate helping and hindering factors as well as the flexibility to learn from participants regarding what they believe might be helpful. It also includes the collection of contextual information that will offer a background for the critical incident information.

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. This chapter offered an introduction to the topic of multiple identities. The next chapter will offer a review of the literature on identity theories, career theories, and the policing profession. The following chapter will offer a description of the ECIT methodology used in this study. The subsequent chapter will be a report of the results of the study and will include representative excerpts from participant interviews. The last chapter will offer a discussion of the findings and their relationship to the existing body of research. The last chapter also includes a discussion of the research, counselling and police
agency implications stemming from these results. The limitations of the study will also be presented. Lastly, I will close with a brief discussion of the study conclusions.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter begins with a historical account of the study of identity role accumulation. Following this brief account, the scope is broadened to include a review of existing literature on general theories of identity, career identity and police identity to offer a theoretical background through which the results of this study may be considered. This literature review will also serve to illuminate the gap in the literature this study is intended to fill. General theories of identity will be discussed, beginning with a review of the seminal works of social identity theory, role-identity theory, identity theory and will include literature on identity accumulation and identity changes processes. The review of the literature was expanded by searching the database PsycINFO using the keywords “identity theory”, “social identity theory”, “identity roles”, “identity accumulation”, and “postmodern identity”. The literature on career identity was explored using PsycINFO using keywords “professional identity” and “career identity”. A review of the literature on the police role began with the works that inspired the proposed study and branched out to include literature referenced in these writings as well as literature found using ProQuest with the keywords “police role”, “police identity”, “police culture”, and “gender and workplace identity”. The origin and evolution of identity role accumulation is discussed next.

History of Identity Role Accumulation

Faris’ (1934) Social Isolation Hypothesis sparked discussions about the relationship of cultural isolation and psychopathology. Faris studied schizophrenia from a sociological perspective. He contended that the cause of schizophrenia was the cultural isolation of the individual. According to Faris, the process of developing schizophrenia began with the individual’s difficulty in social relations that led to failure. This social failure, in turn, led to
social isolation. Social isolation led to additional social eccentricities that would constitute schizophrenia. The absence of others left the individual indifferent to communications and indifferent to conforming to conventional social behaviours. Faris argued that the mind of the individual with schizophrenia was not dis-ordered, but actually organized in a willful manner against the informal social control of the community.

In outlining his theory, Faris offered various anecdotal stories of prisoners in isolation, sheep-herders, and immigrants that were socially isolated as evidence of his theory. He also cited cultures with strong community bonds as lacking in cases of schizophrenia as additional evidence for his theory. Using anecdotal stories as evidence of his theory is highly problematic because there was no control for the influence of other factors in each story. Many details of these stories were missing, rendering their evidentiary value quite low. The logic underlying his theory was also tautological, making its credibility questionable. The process he described where the person experienced difficulty in social situations, followed by schizophrenia, and finally, further isolation, could be the natural course of the schizophrenic disorder, which offers no explanation for its cause. Lastly, Faris offered a story of formerly isolated patients with schizophrenia improving after being included in social activity programs. Again, there could be multiple extraneous factors that contributed to the observed improvements. The social isolation hypothesis was publicly criticized by others on the grounds of ecological fallacy (Robinson, 1950), a failure to operationalize what constituted sufficient attenuation of interpersonal relationships to be deemed “isolation” and regarding the directionality of the isolation: a matter of mental disorder creating isolation or isolation causing mental disorder (Clausen & Kohn, 1954).
Following the repudiation of Faris’ hypothesis, early writing regarding multiple identity roles continued to discuss them in the context of broad societal institutions. As such, much of the literature stems from the discipline of sociology. Identity roles were studied to determine how individual decisions regarding their roles impacted the continuance of social structures. George Herbert Mead’s (1934) *symbolic interactionism* called for a holistic view of multiple roles comprising an organized system of roles. Concern for role strain and role overload were considered threats to the larger social structure (Goode, 1960), not individual concerns.

The emphasis on multiple identities shifted from a sociological issue to a psychological one in the 1970’s and 1980’s. Psychological theories proposed multiple roles either had a psychological buffering (Marks, 1977, 1996; Sieber, 1974; Thoits, 1983, 1995, 2003) or stress inducing effect (Brody, 1990; Goode, 1960; Mui, 1992, 1995) on individuals. This shift placed identity role accumulation in the domain of counselling psychology. Work-life conflict is a common presenting concern in counselling settings and has increased in recent years (Aumann, Galinsky & Matos, 2011; Duxbury & Higgins, 2001). There is also evidence of generational differences in workers’ attitudes toward their work that are creating interpersonal difficulties in the workplace (Eisner, 2005). Counsellors would be wise to become educated about how clients make decisions in negotiating multiple identity roles and what the subsequent consequences are relating to these decisions. There are transition points in clients’ lives where these decisions may have more impact. For instance, clients exiting the workforce through retirement, or involuntary resignation may present for counselling due to an absence of other meaningful roles in their lives (Conn et al., 2015). Similarly, clients may present for counselling due to a couple’s differing views relating to what constitutes a healthy balance of various roles (Duckworth & Buzzanell,
It is incumbent on counsellors to examine the literature that relates to both positive and negative effects of having multiple identity roles.

A large body of research on work-life conflict has been distilled to categories of conflict: time based (excessive work hours), strain based (role stressors that induce physical or psychological pain), and behavior based (parenting versus managerial styles) (Kirby, Wieland, & McBride, 2006). Kirby and colleagues further categorize the work conflict literature into the antecedents of this conflict: work-related factors (shifts and overtime), life-related conflicts (dependent children), and personal characteristics (personality traits). Life-related factors are believed to increase with age as responsibilities such as marriage and parenting arise and decrease as parenting responsibilities lessen with aging children.

**General Theories of Identity**

The literature regarding the concept of identity can be divided into theories that emphasize internalized role identity meanings (Identity Theory [Stryker, 1968, 1980] Role-Identity Theory [McCall & Simmons, 1966], Identity Accumulation Theory [Thoits, 1983, 2003], and Identity Control Theory [Burke, 1991a]) and theories that focus on the cultural and situational influence on identity (Social Identity Theory [Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987]), and Post-modern theories of identity such as Butler’s (1990/1999, 1993, 1997) theories of interiorization, signification and performativity. Theories focusing on the internalized role identity meanings assume stable, internalized aspects of social identities and are concerned with how these aspects are formed and how they impact behaviour across situations. These theories propose a trans-situational self-concept (Owens, Robinson, Smith-Lovin, 2010). Theories focused on cultural and situational contexts are concerned with how these contexts mold certain identities. Post-modern theories of identity propose that identities are dynamic,
self-constructions where individuals interact, cope, and adapt to social, cultural, and physical contexts (Berzonsky, 2005).

Despite the dichotomization of theories as proposing either internally or contextually-based role identity meanings, there are some points of convergence. The base for identity in identity theory is the role while the base for identity for social identity theory is the category or group. Both theories share several concepts, leading to the suggestion of merging the theories into a unified theory of identity (Stets & Burke, 2000). The difference between the theories has been referred to as a matter of basing one’s identity on who one is (social identity theory) or what one does (identity theory) (Thoits & Virshup, 1997). One key distinction between the two theories is the emphasis of each theory on similarity. Social identity theorists emphasize the uniformity of perceptions among group members. Identity theorists focus on the differences in individuals’ perceptions and actions in various roles. A discussion of identity as conceptualized in each theory follows, beginning with identity theory.

**Identity Theory**

In identity theory, the self is composed of several identities, which are arranged hierarchically according to an identity salience structure. More salient identities are enacted if the situation allows individuals to exercise agency or choice. The salience of each identity is contingent on interactional and affective commitment. Interactional commitment refers to the extensiveness of the interactions in a social network where one invokes a particular identity. Affective commitment refers to the individual’s emotional investment in the relationships one has while interacting in said identity role. Levels of commitment are believed to be strongly influenced by various social structures. Proximal social structures such as family and co-workers
exact more influence on commitment than more distal social structures such as school or neighborhood (Stryker, Serpe, & Hunt, 2005).

Persons within the context of a social structure conceive of themselves and others in the form of roles, as occupants of particular positions. Meanings and expectations accompany each role and become incorporated into the core of the self as it occupies this position (Burke & Tully, 1977; Thoits, 1987). According to Burke (1997), a large part of the meaningful activity performed in this role is the control of resources. A role-based identity expresses the interconnected uniqueness of each of the members in their respective roles. Each person within a role sees things from their own perspective, expressing his or her own individuality embedded in a group of inter-related others. This is referred to as self-verification and is purported to underlie processes such as role-taking, role-making, and group formation (Burke & Cast, 1997; Burke & Stets, 1999; Turner, 1962). Self-verification appears to promote self-esteem and self-efficacy (Burke & Stets, 1999) and may be motivated by the person’s desire for self-consistency and self-regulation (Burke, 1991a; Burke & Stets, 1999; Stets, 1997).

**Role-Identity Theory**

McCall and Simmons’ (1966) Role-Identity Theory (RIT) posits that role identities “... influence people’s everyday lives by serving as their primary source of personal action plans” (Owens, Robinson, & Smith-Lovin, 2010, p. 481). There is a strong notion of individuals crafting their identity based upon preferences. These preferences reflect individuals’ concepts of an ideal self, which contributes to their self-esteem. These preferences, and their subsequent personal action plans, are bound by individuals’ social positions. In role-identity theory, “... the self is reflexive in that it can take itself as an object and can categorize, classify, or name itself in
particular ways in relation to other social categories or classifications” (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 224). This process is referred to as identification (McCall & Simmons, 1978). After acting upon preferences, individuals evaluate their behaviors to determine how well they are acting according to their ideal selves. Individuals also look to significant others to determine how they are evaluating their behaviour as well. Lastly, individuals consider the positive and negative consequences of activating their role, much like the process explained in social learning theory (Bandura, 1977).

Negotiation of performance, relationships and interconnectedness of roles is a central feature of RIT. The functionality of each role depends on the successful exchange relation with other roles. Roles compete with counter-roles, each representing varying interests. Individuals view themselves as different from other individuals with whom they interact in their environment, noting differences in resources, values, and interests. Relations with other individuals are considered reciprocal, not parallel.

**Identity Accumulation Theory**

Thoits’ (1983, 1986) identity accumulation hypothesis is considered a reformulation of Faris’ social isolation hypothesis. Thoits set out to explore Faris’ notion that psychological well-being is related to multiple identities by investigating identity enactment. Identity enactment takes place through the interplay of role relationships. According to Thoits (1983),

Role relationships are governed by behavioural expectations; the rights and duties of each interactant are normatively prescribed. Thus, if one knows who one is (in a social sense), then one knows how to behave. Role requirements give purpose, meaning, direction and guidance to one’s life. The greater the number of identities held, the stronger one’s sense
of meaningful, guided existence. The more identities, the more “existential security”, so to speak (p. 175).

Accordingly, if one loses his or her identity, perhaps through leaving employment, the prescribed behaviours are believed to also be lost. The process has been likened to Durkheim’s views on egoistic and anomic suicide (Thoits, 1983). According to Durkheim, egoistic suicide was the result of low levels of social integration; a lack of social and familial bonds (Appelrouth & Desfor-Edles, 2008). Durkheim’s concept of anomic suicide related to a lack of moral direction stemming from rapid personal and social changes which interrupt individuals’ norms and values (Appelrouth & Desfor-Edles, 2008). Durkheim (1951) proposed that members embedded in groups are given a sense of purpose, norms, and stability. Therefore, members who are accepted and enacting in their roles are psychologically protected.

Thoits (1983) contends that the relationship between the accumulation of identities and well-being is not additive but may be curvilinear. There is no ideal number of identities for an individual to have. It varies from person to person and across time. Having too many identities may result in role conflict or role strain while having too few will not promote well-being through having an integrated identity. In addition to the number of identities, several other factors must be considered when weighing the interplay between identities and well-being. Identity salience, and the voluntariness of the role must also be taken into account.

**Identity Control Theory**

Burke’s (1991a) Identity Control Theory (ICT) is considered an elaboration of Stryker’s (1968) Identity Theory. Burke augmented Stryker’s focus on identity choices to include an explanation of how internalized meanings directed actions once an identity had been adopted in
an institutional context (Stryker & Burke, 2000). According to ICT, identity is a fluid process of affirmations and reaffirmations rather than a static individual state or trait. When one’s identity is activated, a feedback loop is established (Burke, 1991a; Powers, 1973). This loop is comprised of four components: an identity standard (a set of self-meanings), an input from the environment (including perceptions of self-relevant meanings), the comparator (process of comparing the input to the standard), and the output to the environment (meaningful behaviour) (Burke, 2006).

According to ICT, a change in identity occurs when a discrepancy exists between the existing identity standards and input from the environment. Environmental input may include one’s own perceptions of the self in a situation or reflected appraisals from others. This discrepancy creates distress for the individual, prompting a change in behaviour, the output portion of the process. At times multiple related identities are affected by the shift in self-relevant meanings resulting in a “compromise position” (Burke, 2006). This compromised position is optimal so that all affected identities can be verified simultaneously. The compromised position will likely favor the identity the person identifies with the most.

The identity process is continuous with minor discrepancies between the identity standard and input until a major event occurs, referred to as an identity interruption. An example early in the police profession would be attending the police academy, especially since it might entail a relocation to attend. Another common occurrence would be exposure to a traumatic event. The identity process is interrupted when the person is prevented from changing the reflected appraisals of others through his or her output behaviours, causing a change in the identity standard. The person may experience feelings of helplessness and a lack of self-efficacy, as he or she is not able to influence the meanings that others impose on him or her. Burke (1991a)
states that the lack of effect of the person’s behaviour could be associated with a loss of identity. Burke likens this experience to that of a person who has lost a job or has lost a loved one since that aspect of identity no longer applies. Even if the person’s behaviour is effective, the person may still misinterpret the situation, essentially feeling as though the behaviour was ineffective. This misinterpretation occurs when one is in an unfamiliar environment such as a new job or getting married.

Burke’s (1991a) identity interruption process is similar to Brown’s identity disruption model (Brown & McGill, 1989). An interruption should not be confused with normal minor continuous adjustments that people make. In fact, the process of these minor continuous adjustments is actually interrupted, producing distress for the person. Burke (1991a) contends there are four critical factors that contribute to the distress one experiences in an identity interruption: 1) when the interruptions are repeated and/or severe, 2) when the interrupted identity is highly salient (important to the person), 3) when the interrupted identity is one the person is highly committed to (dependent on), and 4) when the source of the identity input is from a significant source (person). Identities that relate to each other may be simultaneously activated by an event. Those aspects of identities that are incongruent with each other can create distress as the person attempts to reconcile the discrepancy. A focal identity will create change in the second identity to be more in line with the focal identity’s standard. Identities that do not relate to each other will not affect each other, as they operate independently. Additionally, identities that are congruent will not contribute to role conflict or strain and may actually serve as buffers against stress (Thoits, 1986).

Burke (1991a) draws a distinction between tightly controlled identities and loosely controlled identities. It is not a matter of a more intense level of a particular attribute, i.e. a need
for high levels of control, but, rather, an intolerance or rigidity of being perceived as otherwise (out of control). A study of police dispatchers demonstrated that those with “type A” personalities experienced more distress due to their tightly controlled identities (Kirmeyer, 1988). Similarly, research on authoritarianism (Adorno, Frenkel, Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950) and closed-mindedness (Rokeach, 1960) seem to demonstrate this tightly controlled system.

**Social Identity Theory**

According to social identity theory, the process of seeing the self reflexively whereby one categorizes, classifies, and name itself is referred to as *self-categorization* (Turner, et al., 1987). This refers to an awareness that one belongs to a social category or group. A part of this awareness is the “accentuation of the perceived similarities between the self and other in-group members, and an accentuation of the perceived differences between the self and out-group members” (Stet & Burke, 2000, p. 225). This may be exacerbated when there is no motivation to distinguish oneself from others in the group (Brewer, 1993; Simon, Pantaleo, & Mummendey, 1995). Social identity theory suggests that the core cognitive process is viewing oneself as the embodiment of the in-group prototype (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). This process is referred to as *depersonalization*. This identification as the embodiment of the group leads to the behaviours one associates with the group. An increase in self-worth from receiving the group’s acceptance may be a motivating factor to maintain the group-based identity (Ellison, 1993).

**Post-Modern Identity Theory**

A brief introduction to the modern theory of identity is warranted to demonstrate the progression from the positivist to post-modern position. One modern perspective of identity
describes the concepts of masculinity and femininity as socially constructed in relation to each other in the form of gender roles (Pleck, 1995). Pleck contends that violation of the gender role norms has consequences for the individual and may even lead to excessive conformity to prescribed traits. Pollack (1995) also suggests that one’s identity is a construction, delineating between core gender identity and core gender role identity. According to Pollack, core gender identity is the “binary bedrock . . . [of] being a male or a female . . . [which] offers few choices” (1995, p. 60). On the contrary, core gender role identity is layered on the core gender identity and “represents the internalization of unconscious schemas of what ‘being a man’ means to a particular individual, mediated by the context of their own society, culture, and family” (p. 60).

Postmodern approaches to identity build upon the constructive tone of the modern approach by eliminating the division of mind, body, individual and social (Phillips, 2006). Instead, all are considered to be social constructions. One’s idea of “knowing” oneself is invariably attached to the language constructed to describe it. Unlike the modern view of gender as innate and fixed, the postmodern theorist contends that gender is changeable. The binary of male/females “valorizes the male as ideal” (Phillips, 2006, p. 415). Further, this binary is believed to suggest that men and women are biologically hardwired to behave a certain way. Butler (1990/1999, 1993) proposed the theory of performativity which states that bodily signs such as words, gestures, and behaviours are performative in that they are productions of an internal gender identity. Some examples of these performances includes competitiveness, heterosexuality, and emotional stoicism. Gender performativity is repeated and sustained over time through cultural approval practices. Butler (1997) furthers the performative theory with the theory of interiorization of the psyche in that the repetition of signifying practices and the lived history of language have an unconscious effect on the individual. As such “. . . masculinity can
be understood as repeated stylization of a regulated, signifying body and coming into being as a man is an ongoing, repetitive, and discursive practice (Phillips, 2006, p. 419).

Post-modern identity theorists believe that individuals do not have a transcultural or transhistorical essential self nor a passive self that accepts an identity from its context (Berzonsky, 2005). Rather, individuals and their contexts are believed to interact to construct their identities. The concept of multiple identities is challenged by post-modern theorists as the word “identity” implies a singular entity while post-modernists consider this concept to be more of an interrelated system that is not separate from its parts (Berzonsky, 2003, 2005; Katzko, 2003).

Postmodern theorists contend that having a unified notion of what is masculine is damaging for those that do not fall within this boundary (Phillips, 2006). Even for those within the normative boundaries, its deterministic tone is considered problematic as it both fails to recognize the complexity of individuals and the ability of individuals to change. Identity is believed to be understood by social categories such as sex, sexuality, gender, race, and ethnicity (Allen, Allman, & Powers, 1991; Drevdahl, Phillips, & Taylor, 2006). Phillips (2006) contends “These categories function to regulate and ‘develop’ identity by including and excluding particular characteristics in relation to an assumed ‘normal’” (p. 416). Furthermore, concepts of a “normal male experience” are believed to reflect the privileged male experience (Phillips, 2006, p. 417). Fixing the focus of identity processes at the individual level is problematic for postmodernist in that it oversimplifies matters and negates the social and historical construction of identity.
Identity role transitions are the central concern of Boundary Theory (Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000). According to boundary theory, identity role transitions are deemed boundary-crossing activities where individuals exit and enter roles by surmounting role boundaries. Transitions may be “micro-transitions”, which are frequently-occurring events such as going home from work, or “macro-transitions” that are less frequent and often permanent transitions such as retirement or a change of employment. Boundaries, sometimes referred to as “mental fences” (Zerubavel, 1991), can be thought of as separating geographical locations, people, ideas, and events into various domains. Therefore, a role boundary is defined as “whatever delimits the perimeter – and thereby the scope – of a role” (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000, p. 474). The flexibility and permeability of role boundaries affect micro-transition processes. The flexibility of a boundary relates to the pliability of the spatial and temporal aspects of the boundary (Hall & Richter, 1988). For instance, a person who works from home or is on-call has a more flexible boundary than one who leaves his or her work at work. Permeability of the role pertains to the degree that one can be physically located in one domain, say the home domain, and be psychologically or behaviourally engaged in a role from another domain, such as work. For example, a mother can be at home but thinking about her day at work. Having a flexible, permeable boundary can be positive, as transitions are more easily achieved, but it can also be negative due to the blurring of roles and possibly contribute to role confusion. The more contrast that exists between each domain, the more difficult for an individual “switching cognitive gears” (Louis & Sutton, 1991). The opening quote of this paper reflected this difficulty. Having inflexible, non-permeable boundaries also has benefits and costs. Segmentation of roles results in a lesser degree of role confusion but may result in more effort to transition from one role to
another. Ashforth and colleagues offer the example of a police interrogator demonstrating role-appropriate aggressiveness in her work setting but having difficulty transitioning to her role as a mother upon arriving at home. This difficulty, referred to as “spillover” results in moods, stress, and thoughts from one domain “spilling” into another domain (Marshall, Chadwick, & Marshall, 1992; Williams & Alliger, 1994).

The process of transitioning from one role to another is a three-step process. The first step, role exit, entails disengagement from the role psychologically and physiologically. It might mean a location change and a shift in mindset. A location change may precede or follow the shift in mindset. Certain internal or external cues such as noting the time on the clock or the internal pull toward the next role can initiate the role exit. These cues will prompt the individual to engage in activities referred to as rites of separation, in preparation for exiting the current role. The movement stage, which involves rites of transition, follows next. This stage includes ritualistic activities that produce physical and psychological movement toward the anticipated role. This movement is achieved through changes in attention and arousal (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). Cognitive shifts occur at this stage, as the individual enters into the mindset of the other role. Police officers begin to think less like police officers and more like parents or soccer coaches, depending on the anticipated roles. Similarly, levels of arousal will either be heightened or lessened, depending on the roles. Individuals exiting parent roles while on the way to work must now elevate arousal levels to meet the demands of being police officers. Conversely, they must lower arousal levels as police officers in order to transition back to parent roles. When these rites of transition do not occur, spillover occurs and police officers may “police” their family or “parent” their citizenry, as they have failed to fully exit the preceding role in preparation for the next role. The last stage, role entry, involves the rites of
incorporation. These activities serve as indicators of engaging in the new role. A common example of this activity is recounting and summarizing the day at work at the end of the work day.

The creation, maintenance, and crossing of role boundaries are believed to be influenced by individual and contextual factors (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). At the individual level, the degree of role identification bears on individuals’ tendency toward integration versus segmentation of roles. Role identification occurs when role occupants define themselves at least partly in terms of the role and its identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Pratt, 1998). “I am a police officer” is an example of role identification. Individuals seek more opportunities to express the role identity if it is a valued role that enhances their self-concept and, therefore, have greater role identification (Stryker, 1980). Strong role identification may make it more difficult to transition out of the role and easier to transition into the role. This contention is supported by Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) analysis of motivational flow which states that individuals are more likely to become physically and psychologically immersed in a role if there is an initial affinity for the role. When individuals become immersed in a role they strongly identify with, the physical exit of the role may precede the psychological exit (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000).

The strength of the situational context may mitigate individual factors such as role identification. The work context may offer cues as to proper ways of behaving in that setting. These cues may be rewards or punishments that could shape behaviours, minimizing the influence of individual preferences (Kossek, Noe, & DeMarr, 1999). Similarly, cultural backgrounds may also influence the creation, maintenance and crossing of role boundaries.
Theories of Career Identity

Van Maanen (2010) contends that work is a natural place to study identity since so much of our adult life is spent at work, stating “Work also bestows meaning on individuals through their daily activities – the bundle of tasks that comprise the occupation” (p. 3).

Career identity has been explored in terms of how it relates to the concept of the career project (Cochran, 1992). A career project is comprised of personal themes and their related set of tasks. Life tasks are voluntary, purposeful behaviours that an individual performs for a finite period of time in furtherance of a personal theme. Unlike tasks, personal themes are indefinite, possibly spanning a lifetime. Personal themes are implicit meanings that pervade a life history (Howard, Maerlender, Myers, & Curtin, 1992). A related concept, life structure, is the “underlying pattern or design of a person’s life at a given time” (Levinson, 1978, p. 43). The way that individuals invest their resources, energy and attention contributes to their life structure. Cultivating a career project develops personal qualities such as traits, virtues, or skills that gain meaning as they are integrated in a role (Cochran, 1992). These qualities shape individuals so they may achieve mastery of the role or an identity (Erikson, 1959).

Professional identity is an important concept in career identity. Professional identity is defined as “the relatively stable and enduring constellation of attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences in terms of which people define themselves in a professional role” (Ibarra, 1999, p. 764-765; Schein, 1978). Professional identity is believed to be more malleable at the beginning of individuals’ careers, as it is being formed by experiences and individuals are learning about their preferences, goals, values and talents (Schein, 1978). Professional identity may be differentiated from the police officers’ workplace identity where they identify more with being a police officer, than from the agency they work for. This differentiation has been noted in
other careers (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996; Weick, 1996). Two concepts emerge to explain the evolving professional identity during role acquisition: possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and provisional selves (Ibarra, 1999).

*Possible selves* refers to individuals’ ideas about what they might become (Markus & Nurius, 1986). As such, these ideas include both desirable and undesirable possibilities. Awareness to these possibilities guides individuals’ behaviour, meaning-making, and self-assessment processes. Role models for desirable possible selves inform individuals of appropriate behaviours and attitudes for achieving success. Individuals experiment with these behaviours and attitudes and measure their subsequent effectiveness. Effectiveness is determined by using internal and external feedback and modifying behaviours and attitudes as needed.

Ibarra’s (1999) *provisional selves* builds upon the concept of *possible selves*. *Provisional selves* test the possibilities of the *possible selves*. *Provisional selves* are “temporary solutions people use to bridge the gap between their current capacities and self-conceptions and the representations they hold about what attitudes and behaviors are expected in the new role” (Ibarra, 1999, p. 765). As such, *provisional selves* are oftentimes “makeshift” because they require continual adaptations as individuals respond to their experiences. These adaptations seem to follow the same pattern as occurs in the creation of *possible selves*: 1) observing role models, 2) experimenting with one’s own image, and 3) evaluating the image and identity based on internal and external feedback (Ibarra, 1999). The search for a role model is believed to become more salient when individuals receive feedback indicating a need to improve their image (Ibarra, 1999). Ibarra (1999) found that individuals rely on external and internal evaluations to determine which possible selves to keep and which ones to discard. Internal evaluations are the
individuals’ determination of the match between their self-concept and beliefs and how they present themselves through their actions. The pattern is not necessarily linear, as individuals may be simultaneously observing role models while experimenting with their own images. Furthermore, the construction of provisional selves is contingent on the evolving notions of possible selves in the new role.

Ibarra (1999) suggests that one’s identity is shaped in interaction with external evaluation sources in two primary ways: by validation (or failure to endorse) new behaviours and through feedback on how to improve. When individuals receive positive feedback regarding their new role behaviours they tend to repeat these behaviours. The impact of negative feedback is a more complicated process. Negative feedback involves more identification processes and depends on the affective bond between the person receiving the feedback and the person giving the feedback (Foote, 1951; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). For instance, if the person receiving feedback does not identify with or respect the person giving feedback, he or she will be less likely to accept the feedback and make changes based upon it.

The formation and maintenance of a career identity can also be understood by examining the tenets of Chaos Theory (Pryor & Bryant, 2005) and Planned Happenstance Theory (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999). Both theories introduce the uncertainty of career trajectories created by environmental and situational circumstances. This uncertainty is not restricted to career issues but also affect individuals’ personal lives as Krumboltz suggested “Career and personal aspects of life are intertwined” (2009, p. 141). According to Krumboltz (2009), potential opportunities are found in every situation. Individuals who recognize these opportunities can capitalize on them. The combination of planned and unplanned actions stemming from self-initiated and circumstantial situations results in a complex and unpredictable
set of possibilities referred to as “happenstance” (p. 136). Planned happenstance theory holds that individuals learn from these planned and unplanned personal learning experiences and by observing the behaviour of others, referred to as associative learning experiences (Krumboltz, 2009). In both personal and observed experiences, positive and negative consequences are considered to determine which behaviours will be repeated. This process is similar to Ibarra’s (1999) description of the processing of testing and evaluating provisional selves.

Pryor, Bryant, and Harpham (2005) considered Rotter’s (1966) concept of locus of control in relation to Chaos Theory. Locus of control refers to the degree to which individuals attribute the occurrence of environmental events to internal factors they control (internal locus of control) or environmental factors they do not control (external locus of control) (Rotter, 1966). They proposed a relationship between individuals’ locus of control orientation and the levels of influence that chance events had on their career decision making processes. They hypothesized that individuals with a higher external locus of control would report that chance events had more influence on career decision making situations. They found that the majority of their study participants reported chance events had influenced their career decision making. These decisions likely impacted their career identities.

Khapova and colleagues (Khapova, Arthur, Wilderom, & Svensson, 2006) proposed a relationship between professional identity and Ajzen’s (1991) theory of planned behavior. The theory of planned behavior states that human behavior is guided by considerations of: 1) beliefs about the likely consequences of a behaviour, 2) beliefs about the expectations of other people, and 3) beliefs about the presence of factors that may further or hinder performance of the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Professional identity was predicted to moderate the strength of the relationship between the three factors of Ajzen’ theory and the worker’s intent toward career
change (Khapova, et al., 2006). Khapova and colleagues found that professional identity and career self-efficacy were significantly related to career change intention. They conducted additional analyses, using professional identity as a predictor instead of as a moderator, and found it to be the only significant predictor of intention to change careers. They pointed to research which proposed self-efficacy as a component of identity (Svejenova, 2005) or suggested that identity and self-efficacy were interdependent concepts (Sargent, Allen, & Bradley, 2005).

Research on generational differences in the workplace has reflected a shift in younger workers’ attitudes toward and attachments with their work identity (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001; Galt, 2000; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). Generational cohort theory (Inglehart, 1977) explains the differences observed across generations. Socialization processes and scarcity theory are assumed to be responsible for these differences (Dou, Wang, & Zhou, 2006). Age cohorts place the highest value on socioeconomic resources that were scarce when they were young (Dou, et al, 2006) and/or during their early socialization years in their work experience (Favero & Heath, 2012).

One observable difference between age cohorts is that younger workers have demonstrated a tendency toward “working to live” rather than “living to work” (Loughlin & Barling, 2001). They see work as a means to pay their debt and buy things (Rawlins, Indvik, & Johnson, 2008). Their vocational choices seem to be influenced by their observations of their parents. Younger workers seek a more balanced life than their Boomer parents (Eisner, 2005). I conducted a study of older emergency service workers where participants reported a disjuncture between younger and older workers’ attitudes toward their employment and their commitment to their work role (Conn, Amundson, Borgen, & Butterfield, 2015). Older workers reported that younger workers were “different” in their emphasis on individuality instead of allegiance to the
collective group or team. Younger workers were believed to have less respect for veteran police officers. Other research echoes this observation that Generation Y workers believe respect is earned and not granted by virtue of rank (Behrens, 2009; Deyoe & Fox, 2012). These perceived differences are being reflected by many in the research on generational differences in the workplace (Behrens, 2009; Deyoe & Fox, 2012; Eisner, 2005). Work-life balance (Brinckerhoff, 2007) and acceptable work hours have been found to be a common source of conflict between generations in the workforce (Miller, 2004). Aging workers who now desire work-life balance have difficulty admitting and acting on their need based upon their generation’s invention of the 60-hour workweek (Martin & Tulgan, 2006; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). We now turn our focus to the professional identity of interest in this study: the police identity.

**Police Identity**

Oftentimes the assimilation of the police identity results in the relinquishment of other sources of identity (Gilmartin, 2002; Kirschman, 1983; Paton et al., 2009). This constriction of identity roles may result in what Harris (1973) refers to as “false personalization”, where officer act out roles that may be contrary to their true identities and feelings. “From the beginning, cops are taught to maintain an occupational persona: a ‘public face’ that makes them always appear to be in control, on top of things, knowledgeable, and unafraid” (Kirschman, 1997, p. 18). Kirschman warns that police officers may initially be feigning emotional control but this act eventually becomes a habit. Police officers begin to depersonalize situations and this extends to their life outside of work (Paton et al., 2009). Effectively, false personalization becomes depersonalization.

Seay (2009) discusses Mead’s (1934) concept of “functionalistic roles” to explain some of the difficulties experienced with the police identity. Mead contended there were functional
roles and social action roles. Functional roles relate to work and other means of contributing to society while social action roles relate to non-work activities such as leisure and family. Society’s expectations of police officers to perform certain duties and responsibilities contribute to the functionalist approach to identity (Seay, 2009). The functional role of the police officer may be generalized to one’s identity as a police officer, making transition to a social action role such as family member more difficult (Seay, 2009). This transition difficulty may contribute to the stress of the individual (Burke, 1991a).

**Police Culture.**

Police culture is a prominent influence on police officers’ identity processes beginning at the hiring stage and continuing through retirement (Paton et al., 2009). Conti (2009) found that a police academy attempted to “generate some commonality in perspective through ritual and symbolism” (p. 410). Conformity is expected and this expectation is relayed formally and informally through training practices. Conti’s contention echoed the sentiment of Kappeler, Sluder, and Alpert (1998) who suggested that police socialization is “an ideology and shared culture that breeds unprecedented conformity to the traditional police norms and values” (p. 84). Socialization is achieved through academy training through the process of reintegrative shaming (Braithwaite, 2007) where police recruits are shamed for their former status as civilians while working toward status elevation to the position of police officer.

Changes in identity stemming from a police recruit’s career have been explained using the concept of *moral career*, which refers to “the regular sequence of changes that career entails in the person’s self and his framework of imagery for judging himself and others” (Goffman, 1961 as cited in Conti, 2009, p. 414). The shift from civilian to police recruit is a shift in social
category that is believed to have a significant impact on the self (Conti, 2009). This shift is captured by the following quote from Goffman (1961):

The recruit . . . begins a series of abasements, degradation, humiliations, and profanations of the self. His self is systematically, if often unintentionally, mortified. He begins some radical shifts in his moral career, a career composed of the progressive changes that occur in the beliefs that he has concerning himself and the significance of others (as cited in Conti, 2009, p. 415).

Accompanying the degradation and shaming of police recruits’ former civilian self is the glorification of the police role. The police recruits aspire to elevate their status by moving toward becoming a police officer. This process has been likened to Burke’s (1991b, 1997, 2006) identity control theory where the ideal recruit identity standard is created by academy staff and reaffirmed by veteran recruits. Civilian recruits must then match the standard set forth by academy staff. Pressure to conform to this standard is employed by noting the discrepancies using constant inspections and demanding corrective changes in role-associated behaviours. Recruits were noted to informally internalize the role of academy staff and began inspecting each other to ensure that no discrepancies between the academy staff standards and recruit behaviour or appearance occurred (Conti, 2009). As a former police officer, I recall the term “police it up” to refer to this process of monitoring for adherence to the expected standard. “Class sergeants” were designated to apply pressure for standard conformity upon the recruit class. Despite the degradation and glorification process, some police recruits manage to resist the transformations of a moral career (Conti, 2009).
The socialization practices at the academy extend to post-academy expectations of police officer behaviour outside of the workplace. Police recruits receive messages regarding their visibility and scrutiny as police officers even while not at work (Conti, 2009). This message implies a 24/7 embodiment of the police role.

The organizational context is believed to influence levels of coherence between occupational roles, identities, and expectations of officers (Dunning, 2003). When organizational experiences are positive, the organizational context offers coherence to occupational roles, identities, and expectations. Negative organizational experiences break down coherence, resulting in a negative influence on officers’ professional identities and future performance capabilities (Paton & Stephens, 1996).

The traditional police culture is believed to be shifting based upon some evolutions within the profession. Loftus (2010) points to three critical shifts in the policing profession: community policing, recruitment processes, and civilian oversight. The movement to community policing shifts the interaction between the police and the public, calling for a different skill set and relationship with the public. Recruitment patterns have also evolved to include more minority ethnic, women, and gay and lesbian backgrounds. These groups are believed to dilute the established culture by introducing new styles of policing (Foster, 2003). Yet, Loftus (2010) contends that despite these shifts, the underlying world view of police officers persists due to “peculiarities of the police role” (p. 3). This persistence is owed, at least in part, to the exaggerated sense of mission in the police role, elevating it to the status of a “calling”. This status is reflected in the statement of an officer discussing reasons for joining the police with Loftus. The officer stated “It’s not a job though is it? It’s a lifestyle (others agree). You can’t go home and think, ‘I am not a policeman’. You go home and you are who you are.” (p. 5).
This may be exacerbated by the police officer’s visible symbols of state authority, which serve to isolate them from others outside of policing (Reiner, 2000). The police role remains intact because wider social change has not occurred, leaving demands upon the police to remain constant: enforce the law while facing potential danger in their daily encounters, and do so in an efficient manner (Loftus, 2010). Even community policing initiatives have been quantified for evaluation with some departments requiring quotas for citizen contacts and community meetings.

The police identity is likely influenced by normative orders, a concept proposed by Herbert, which refers to a “generalized set of rules and common practices oriented around a common value” (1998, p. 347). Herbert identified six normative orders within policing: law, bureaucratic control, adventure / machismo, safety, competence, and morality. These normative orders are believed to provide officers with a frame for understanding, enacting, and valuing situations (Herbert, 1998).

Police officers are shaped by the degree to which police managers intentionally or unintentionally reinforce their everyday identity claims (Van Maanen, 2010). Goffman suggests “A self (then) virtually awaits the individual entering a position; he needs only to conform to the pressures on him and he will find a ‘me’ ready-made for him” (1961, 87-88). Van Maanen (2010) attests that the job may offer its occupants a valued “me”.

Some duty conscious officers complain that too many of their cohorts back out of their police responsibilities and point to the fact that many officers ride to and from work in plain clothes, have no sense of obligation to intervene in police relevant situations they witness off-duty and talk about their occupation as if they simply fell into it accidentally. . . For some officers, policing is a 24-hour a day matter, a seven day a week
responsibility, a way of being – in uniform or out. It is not a job but a way of life, a way of being premised on considerable sacrifice. Needless to say, a quite strong sense of self and feeling of importance results (Van Maanen, 2010, p. 19).

Historically, uniformity is strongly promoted in police agencies. This uniformity ranges from the distinctive uniforms, a code of conduct, chain of command, a strong emphasis on consistency and procedural norms. Stet and Burke (2000) contend that there is a uniformity of perceptions and actions in those that possess a group-based identity. Alternatively, those that possess a role identity adopt self-meanings and expectations and act in accordance with these as they relate to other roles within the group (Thoits & Virshup, 1997). If a group-based identification constricts the thought-action repertoire, it may offer an explanation for how some police officers are not able to maintain multiple roles, thereby promoting a wider array of problem solving thoughts and skills.

The shared meaning prevalent in the police role is exacerbated by the documented tendency for police to isolate themselves from non-police (Gilmartin, 2002; Kirschman, 1997). This isolation behaviour is a breeding ground for cynicism and a lack of environmental input that would contradict the identity standard the police officer has adopted. Burke (2006) asserts that people selectively interact with others in order to avoid large identity changes due to the possibility that others will attempt to disconfirm the current identity. Burke also states that people demonstrate identity cues to indicate identity and how one should be treated based upon this identification.
Gender Role Socialization.

One facet of identity that is critical to consider in policing is gender. The police identity is renowned for its masculinity theme (Martin, 1980; Smith & Gray, 1985; Heidensohn, 1992). Masculine ideals in policing culture apply to both men and women. Hunt (1990) identified formal rules and administration as being reflective of feminine characteristics while resistance to management was considered masculine. Loftus (2010) found that it was mainly female police officers who adopted a more service-oriented approach to their job. This service-oriented view of policing contradicts the masculine crime-fighter image and is devalued and associated with feminine qualities, sometimes even referred to as the work of “station queens” (Herbert, 2001). West and Zimmerman (1987) have created a framework called “doing gender” which refers to behaviour that recognizes that one is accountable to one’s membership in a sex category as a man or a woman.

Even though ‘the manly man or the womanly woman’ (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 23) is a social artefact, both men and women are trapped in it; women either accept their biological inferiority or strive to overcome it by becoming the manly policewoman, while men take to risky behaviour to prove ‘they have balls’, e.g. high speed chase, heavy drinking, and so on. (Chan, Doran, & Marel, 2010, p. 426-427)

Doing gender in policing often involves the consent of male and females police officers in associating masculinity with “real police work”. In this way, female police officers unwittingly consent and contribute to their denigration as women in a “man’s profession”. Gender, therefore, is a constructivist concept that reflects what one does rather than what one is, hence the term “doing” gender, not “being” gender. Doing gender depends on the gender, age, and
occupation of the individual (Chan, Doran, & Marel, 2010). *Undoing gender* refers to the individual resisting discriminatory treatment due to gender while *doing and undoing gender* refers to the belief that women were different but wanting female officers to be treated equally regardless of the difference (Chan et al., 2010).

Chan and colleagues’ examination of *doing* and *undoing* of gender in policing found that between 1995 and 2005 most of the female officers had changed their gender practice during their years of police service (Chan, Doran, & Marel, 2010). This finding supported their contention that gender identity is not a fixed quality but, rather, is continuously changing in social interactions. They provided an illustrative example of the gender identity change over the years demonstrating that two of the female officer participants were *doing police* for the first two years of their career. During this initial period the participants were focused on skill building in the policing profession while downplaying their gender differences to appear equal to other police officers. By the end of the study, both of the female officers had shifted to *doing gender* because they had established themselves as police officers among their peers and were now focused on their family life. These two female officers were still not *undoing gender* in that they indicated acceptance of male officer protectiveness in their work and emphasized the physical differences between male and female police officers. Chan and colleagues concluded that there was a false dichotomy between differences and equality that hindered female officer participants from *undoing gender*. Female officers had come to accept that police work required a certain degree of physicality justifying protection of female officers by male officers. Female officers also accepted the division of labour based on gender due to the perceived superiority of female officers’ people skills. Acceptance of this dichotomy may lead female officers to perform what Miller (2002) refers to as *gender strategies* where women’s actions are seen as attempts to
navigate in a male-dominated environment. Embracing gender stereotypes such as the male’s physicality and female’s people skills exemplify these gender strategies.

Despite the increase in the proportion of women in policing, it continues to be a male-dominated profession. The organizational culture of policing, in turn, continues to perpetuate the gender norms for males, promoting specific values and ways of behaving that are inherently discriminatory against female police officers. This male-dominant culture is not unique to policing, as many organizational cultures are believed to favor male gender norms which include organizational practices and gender identities (Mills, 1988; Ramsay & Parker, 1992).

One gender-biased practice in organizations is the value placed on commitment to one’s work above family, including working long hours and being available after hours (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014). Beyond working long hours, there is a documented tendency of after-hours socializing that tends to exclude women (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014). This “boys club” forges bonds between male workers, which proves to be beneficial when promotions and preferred assignments are considered. The masculine cultural practice of working long hours is problematic for female workers not only due to the reaction of their co-workers but in their own sense of fairness, often referred to as “mother’s guilt” where the female worker is conflicted about her commitment to her work, pulling her fair share of the workload, and to her commitment to her children. The disadvantage of stereotypical thinking and behaviour to working mothers is referred to as the “maternal wall” (Crosby, Williams, & Biernat, 2004; Williams, 2001). Women who do not have children are better able to achieve career success (Lyness and Thompson, 2000; Wood and Newton, 2006). Similarly, women who have partners who provide child care and domestic support also appreciate more success in the workplace (Ford and Collinson, 2011).
The masculine culture in the workplace also impacts men. Men are expected to behave in ways that are considered the opposite of stereotypically female ways of behaving, even if it is not their nature to behave this way (Wicks & Bradshaw, 1999). Becoming a father elevates the status of the male worker, as it is believed to make him a better worker while becoming a mother has the opposite effect on women (Hodges & Budig, 2010).

**Review of Policing Research**

A large body of research on work-life balance in Canada has been conducted by Linda Duxbury and Christopher Higgins (Duxbury 2007; Duxbury & Higgins, 2001, 2003, 2012). Some of their studies have focused on the national police force of Canada, The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), while others have focused on other sectors in the workplace. Below is a summary of their key findings.

Duxbury and Higgins (2001) conducted a study of work-life balance of employees across private, public, and non-profit sectors. Results from the original sample in 1991 was compared to a comparable but smaller sample in 2001 to determine any changes in work-life balance. They found that across the ten years there was an increase in role overload (RO) and a decline in employee health not attributable to aging. Work appeared to interfere more with family (WTF) than family interfered with work (FTW). The average number of hours worked increased from 40.8 to 43 hours. The percentage of workers who took work home also increased from 32% in 1991 to 52% in 2001.

Duxbury and Higgins conducted several studies of the RCMP from 2001 to 2007, culminating in a report summary of their findings published by Duxbury in 2007. In 2001, they conducted a study of work-life balance with 3001 regular police members, 577 civilian members
and 476 community service members of the RCMP. They followed up on this study in 2004 with longitudinal data from 44 male constable/corporals, 38 female constable/corporals, 37 male sergeants/staff sergeants, and 34 male of the rank of inspector or above. Longitudinal data included both survey and interview data. Duxbury and Higgins also collected RCMP employee opinions through surveys distributed in 2003, 2005 and 2007 with response rates of 38%, 28% and 39%, respectively. A summary of their findings follows next.

Duxbury and Higgins found that the RCMP has a culture that is “respectful of the position rather than the person . . . overcommitted . . . over stretched . . . focused on process and face time not common sense and output . . . hours and presenteeism versus output” (Duxbury, 2007, p. 6). Duxbury and Higgins (2003) found that the workload continued to increase throughout the years of their study. Many employees reported that they could not complete their work during regular hours so they donated their personal time (i.e., evenings and weekends) to get work done (Duxbury, 2007). Duxbury concluded from interviews and background readings that the RCMP has a “stretch culture” where police members are expected to sacrifice their personal time for the benefit of the organization. Making matters worse, Duxbury found that the more work police members did and the better they did it, the more work they received (2007). Duxbury suggested that the RCMP needed to identify those employees who were working long hours at work, determine the cause(s), and remediate these causes so that workloads are more manageable. She warns that the current workload and work-life imbalance is not sustainable and will cost both the organization as a whole and its members (Duxbury, 2007).

Duxbury and Higgins’ (2003) study of work-life balance found strong evidence of imbalance. Over half the respondents indicated that the organization promoted a culture of “work or family” instead of “work and family”. Two-thirds of respondents also reported an
organizational emphasis on hours rather than output, but stated that it was acceptable to refuse overtime. Twenty-percent of respondents reported that they felt they could not say “no” to overtime, regardless of the circumstances. Duxbury and Higgins found a decline in organizational commitment of frontline police constables and police corporals between 2001 and 2003. The reported percentage of those who were highly committed to their work dropped from 67% to 51%. Additionally, they found in this same period that the percentage of those with a high intent to turnover had doubled.

Duxbury and Higgins (2012) conducted another study on work-life conflict and employee well-being with 4500 police employees from 25 police agencies across Canada. Two-thirds of the participants were police officers while the remaining portion were civilian employees. Participants completed an online survey which queried their work-life demands and health.

A majority of participants identified having heavy responsibilities at work and at home. Sixty-two percent of participants reported participation in childcare at home while 20% reported having responsibility for an elderly parent. Many of the participants indicated that they were married to highly-educated partners and living in dual-career homes, with only 11% reporting a stay-at-home partner.

The hours of the participants also seemed to influence their work-life balance. Forty-four percent of the participants worked a fixed dayshift schedule while 14% worked a fixed shift and 42% worked a rotating shift. The duration of shifts also varied from 8 hours (5%), 10 hours (39%), 12 hours (41%) and some combination of these hours (9%). Additionally, they found that participants worked an average of 44 hours a week with 78% working more than 45 hours a week while 64% report taking work home with them because they could not get the work
completed during work hours. They also reported an average of 4.3 hours per week of commuting to work. In addition to the long hours of work at the job, 79% of participants reported responding to work-related emails on their days off. Participants also cited additional stress from work being extended into their personal lives by communications technology (28%), and reported that technology had increased their work load (37%). Use of technology made it harder to balance work-life demands for 14% while it facilitated this balance for 17% of participants. Use of technology was a bigger barrier for men than women in this study, in that women were more apt to limit their technology usage outside of work.

The demands of police work were also identified as an influential factor in work-life balance. Multiple, competing demands were identified by 40% of participants as contributing to their stress. Some of the demands were the volume of work, having to attend court on days off, and doing work outside of their mandates. Making matters worse was the lack of staff resources cited by (40%) due to absenteeism, maternity leave, and secondments.

Despite the findings of excessive work demands, most of the participants indicated satisfaction in their work (95%). Their satisfaction largely related to their pay (80%), and the tasks of the job (78%), and even the number of hours they work (73%) and how their hours are scheduled (68%). Most surprising, given the other findings, is that 60% of participants indicated satisfaction with their current workload. Participants did identify work-life conflicts (22%) which impacted their productivity at work, causing them to reduce their hours (20%), increase absences from work (20%), increase their usage of benefits (19%) and decline a promotion (19%).
Duxbury and Higgins (2012) also measured employee outcomes relating to stress, mood, health, work-life conflict and role overload. They found that 50% of participants reported high levels of stress, 46% reported low levels of stress and 4% reported no stress. One in four police officers was considered to be in poorer physical health despite being relatively young. Role interference was measured bi-directionally from family to work and from work to family. Work to family role interference was found to be high for 43% of participants while 33% reported this interference as moderate. A high level of role interference from family to work was reported by 20% of participants while 46% reported moderate levels of this interference. The last measure, role overload, was measured on the basis of total overload, work overload, and family overload. At work, 40% reported high overload and 36% reported moderate overload. Work demands were considered to be unremitting while demands at home were deemed variable.

Finally, Duxbury and Higgins (2012) examined several moderators of work-life conflict such as organizational culture, control at work and home, supportive manager and supportive management behaviours, non-supportive management behaviours, perceived flexibility, work life facilitation and work-life boundary permeability, and decision-making regarding children. In summary, organizational culture was believed to promote a prioritization of work over family; there was a perception of less control over work than family; working for a supportive manager helped employees more so than non-supportive managers while working for a manager who was mixed as being supportive / non-supportive was worse than non-supportive managers due to mixed messages; supportive managers are available, are knowledgeable, communicative, and provide career development opportunities; having flexibility with work hours to include being able to take off holidays or time for sick children is helpful; work seldom facilitates family roles while the family roles facilitate work roles, possibly due to the higher levels of perceived control
in the family domain; and lastly, work-life conflict has resulted in the reduction of family size or the delay of having children.

Seay (2009) conducted a study of police officers’ job-related stress, specifically post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), their functionality in life roles and their life satisfaction. Seay conducted the study with 69 police officers (25% response rate), providing them with a 110-item survey which was the compilation of various surveys designed to measure PTSD, police stress, satisfaction of life, meaning of life, and self-image. Seay measured the success of identity role transitions by evaluating participants’ satisfaction and meaning of life as well as their self-image. Participants came from five police departments in the western United States.

The majority of participants identified experiencing some job-related stress (95%) but indicated that they were coping with the stress, were happy (95%), satisfied with life (84%), had a great sense of self (94%), and a higher meaning of life (53%). In addition to these positive findings, Seay found that participants reported fairly high levels of symptomology such as irritability (62%), mistrust of others (59%), anxiety (57%), lack of feelings (52%), restlessness (52%), difficulty falling asleep (46%), marital problems (39%), and PTSD (12%). Investigation into the profiles of the eight officers who indicated PTSD symptomology reflected they were stressed by organizational factors such as inadequate equipment, feeling pressure to volunteer free time, pressure to not call in sick, pressure to prove themselves to the organization, dealing with excessive duties, and operational factors such as vivid memories of prior unpleasant events, requiring them to make deliberate attempts to not think about traumatic experiences, avoid reminders of the events, and feeling numb to others. Some of these participants also reported a lack of leisure activities. Seay questioned the contradictory finding that officers identified as coping but reported high rates of symptomology. Seay suggested a possible explanation was that
officers developed their coping in response to the symptomology. An alternative explanation offered was that participants’ responses were influenced by a police culture that discourages appearing weak.

**Gap in the Literature**

Although the literature discusses the beneficial impact of occupying multiple identity roles (Thoits, 1983, 1986, 2003), and the deleterious effects of not maintaining a broad identity (Gilmartin, 2002; Paton et al., 2009), it does not address how some are able to maintain a broad identity especially in a profession with a documented history of narrowing identities. Fine (1996) called for greater empirical attention to the diverse ways individuals make sense of their occupational identities and how these identities are displayed. Fine refers to these variations of self-construction in occupational roles as “situated differentiation”. Boundary theory addresses how individuals transition between various roles but does not explain how some of these role transitions fail to occur while others continue (Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000). Maintaining multiple identities is also not explained by the concept of “spillover” (Marshall, Chadwick, & Marshall, 1992; Williams & Alliger, 1994), as this pertains to the influence of moods, stress, and thoughts from one domain to another, not the elimination and maintenance of identity roles, per se. Career theories addressing identity change processes such as Ibarra’s (1999) *provisional selves* and Markus and Nurius’ (1986) *possible selves* have not been applied to the processes involved in maintaining or increasing multiple identity roles outside of the workplace setting. Police identity theories address the processes of acquiring the police identity and the cultural impact on this process but do not discuss, beyond a few exceptions to these processes, how some police officers maintain identity roles outside of their police identity role. Studies that discuss police recruits who maintain their other identity roles regard these recruits as anomalies to a
consuming process of the enculturation of the police identity and do not offer explanations for these anomalies. There are few studies of police identity processes beyond the academy setting. This study aims to examine the ongoing identity processes of police officers. Hopefully, the exploration of these processes will generate additional research, resulting in the development of more comprehensive identity accumulation and maintenance theories. I believe that learning how some police officers maintain a broad identity may contribute to our understanding of how to promote these processes.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The study was conducted using the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) (Butterfield, Borgen, Maglio & Amundson, 2009; Flanagan, 1954). This qualitative method illuminated factors that participants believed influence the behaviour being examined. Semi-structured interviews allowed for both structure and flexibility in exploring the factors the participants believe influence their identity-role processes. ECIT has been used extensively in examining career-related issues such as decision-making and coping (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson & Erlebach, 2010; Conn, Amundson, Borgen & Butterfield, 2015; Conn & Butterfield, 2013).

The critical incident technique (CIT) originated in industrial and organizational psychology, making it an appropriate methodology to examine the research topic. Flanagan (1954) originally used the CIT method during World War II to interview pilots about their performance. Pilots were asked to report their observations about their own performance or another pilot’s and identify factors that were helpful to carry out their mission. Flanagan analyzed these interviews to determine the factors that were critical to perform tasks (Woolsey, 1986). Following the war, Flanagan extended the CIT method to industry, examining the tasks that were critical for performance in the workplace including the counselling profession (Flanagan, 1954).

In their historical description of the CIT method, Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, and Maglio (2005) cited “. . . four major departures from the way he (Flanagan) envisioned the method” (2005, p. 479). The first departure was the shift from a behavioural approach focusing on observations to a focus on psychological states such as emotional immaturity (Eilbert, 1953) and work motivation (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). Woolsey (1986) extended the
application of the CIT method to counselling research. Woolsey contended that the CIT method was well suited for psychotherapy research based on its ability to generate information about factual occurrences as well as qualities or attributes (Butterfield, et al., 2005). The second departure is the shift from observations to retrospective self-report. The third departure is the data analysis process (Butterfield, et al., 2005). Many researchers who have used the CIT method since its inception have modified the process (Gottman & Clasen, 1972; Kirk, 1995, Miwa, 2000). The fourth departure is the manner of establishing the credibility of the findings (Butterfield, et al., 2005). In their review of over 100 CIT studies, Butterfield and colleagues found myriad forms of credibility checks owed to a lack of clear guidelines for performing them. In their 2005 article which chronicled the 50 year history of the CIT method, they clearly outlined the nine credibility checks that were being utilized.

Recently, the CIT method has been replaced with the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT). The (ECIT) builds upon the knowledge obtained in a CIT study by including an examination of the contextual factors that portray the background for which the critical incidents can be understood. Another benefit of the ECIT method, as compared to the CIT method is the inclusion of the “wish list” question: “What might be helpful, if it were available?” This question offers additional insight into the participant’s needs and preferences and extends the usefulness of their responses with practical policy and practice implications. The ECIT method also includes the formal incorporation of the nine credibility checks.

Bormann et al. (2006) studied a stress management program for veterans and employees to determine its helpfulness using the CIT method. In this study, participants were interviewed using a CIT interview protocol three months following a 5-week stress management program which emphasized repeating mantras to reduce stress. Bormann et al. identified program
components that were considered by participants to be helpful or not helpful and included a description of the situations where the participants applied program components.

CIT has been successfully used in determining incidents that were helpful or hindering in career settings. Amundson, Borgen, Jordan, and Erlebach (2004) used the CIT to examine incidents that helped or hindered employees during the transition period following organizational downsizing. The study findings included transcription excerpts from CIT interviews to communicate employees’ experiences in this transitional process. The study culminated with implications for counselling stemming from the identified critical incidents.

Butterfield and Borgen (2005) used the ECIT method to determine which outplacement counselling services terminated workers found to be helpful or hindering in their transition from employment to unemployment. With the addition of the wish list question, they were also able to learn if there were services that would have been helpful had they been available. Butterfield and Borgen used the ECIT to explore these questions. Again, excerpts of critical incidents and wish list items were included in the reported results to substantiate as well as illustrate the categories that emerged. Implications for outplacement counselling agencies were also discussed. Similarly, in the current study the researcher intended to identify what helps, hinders, and might help police officers to maintain a broad identity in hopes of informing counselling professionals and police agency policy and practices.

ECIT can be considered positivist or post-modern constructivist, depending on the ideology of the researcher (Chell & Pittaway, 1998). In the post-modern research paradigm, the CIT method is considered an investigative tool while, in the positivist paradigm, it is considered more of a scientific tool. According to Chell and Pittaway (1998), the CIT method was developed during a time when quantitative research reigned and, for this reason, it was initially
designed as a scientific tool for analyzing tasks in order to uncover, measure and control objective truths (Butterfield et al., 2005). A post-positivist research framework is assumed in this ECIT study as participants provided retrospective reports of their identity processes.

**Participant Recruiting**

To obtain a diverse set of experiences from police officers, I invited 21 police officers from various locations in Canada and the United States for interviews. Participants were recruited through Canadian and American police agencies, professional associations and publications such as the British Columbia Police Association and Blue Line Police Magazine. Introductory letters (see Appendix A) and recruitment posters (see Appendix C) were directed to administrators of police agencies and professional associations for dissemination to potential participants. For clarity, the term “multiple identity (life) roles” was used in the recruitment material instead of the term “broad identity” to enhance potential participants’ understanding of the focus of the study.

A pre-screening questionnaire (see Appendix D) facilitated selection of police officers who: 1) had at least five years of experience on the job in order to be subjected to the documented tendency to reduce the number of identity roles (Gilmartin, 2002; Paton, Violanti, Burke, & Gehrke, 2009), 2) self-identified as having a broad identity, and 3) indicated they are content with the number of identity (life) roles they had. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants, beginning with a preamble that provided the definition of the concept of broad identity. Following the preamble, I asked contextual questions and inquired of incidents participants believed to help and hinder their ability to maintain a broad identity as well as factors they believed *would* be helpful if they were available to them. The interviews were between 25 and 112 minutes, with the average interview time being 54 minutes.
If the prospective participant met the inclusion criteria, a consent form (see Appendix B) was emailed to the individual for review. The participant was instructed to contact me with any questions and to indicate their continued willingness to participate in the study. Once written consent was received via email, facsimile, or mail, an interview was scheduled at a time and phone number that the participant designated as convenient. Consent was revisited prior to the beginning of the interview, where participants were reminded of their right to withdraw from the study or to refuse to answer a question. Each participant was assigned a participant number in the interest of confidentiality. An assumption of competence to give consent was based upon the grounds that all participants were adults and had been subjected to a psychological background check upon entry into the policing profession and have been able to maintain employment in this capacity. If the prospective participant did not meet the criteria, which occurred in the initial inquiry of three interested persons, they were advised that the study objectives were to study the helping and hindering factors of active-duty police officers (2 interested persons were retired) who were content with the number of roles they had (one indicated he had too many roles).

I conducted interviews with 21 participants. Participants came from 14 police agencies, including municipal, provincial / state and national police forces across Canada and the United States. Participants’ years of experience spanned a wide range from 5 to 31 years. The average time on the job was 20 years. Participants came from various positions within policing to include the patrol division (7 participants), police administration (5 participants), investigations division (4 participants), community policing division (3 participants), special operations (1 participant), and one participant indicated that he was assigned to both patrol and investigations. Rank varied from eight constable / patrolman / troopers, two corporals, five sergeants, two staff sergeants, two lieutenants, and two chiefs of police. The sample consisted of 13 male and 8
female police officers, a disproportionately higher ratio of females for the policing profession. In Canada the proportion of females in policing is 20% (Statistics Canada, 2013) while in the United States females comprise 13% of the police population (U.S. Department of Justice, 2013). The age range of participants was 29 to 52 years of age with an average of 43 years of age. Eighteen participants reported being married, two reported being in a common-law relationship, and one reported being single. Two-thirds of the participants had children (14) and one-third did not (7). The average household income reported was $175,000, with a range of $94,000 to $260,000. Twelve of the participants were born in Canada, seven were born in the United States, and two were born in the United Kingdom. One participant identified German as a first language, and the other 20 participants identified English as their first language. Years of post-secondary education ranged from having some college (2 participants), a college diploma (3 participants), a bachelor’s degree (10 participants), up to a master’s degree (6 participants).

Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT)

I followed the five steps of an ECIT study (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Maglio, 2005; Flanagan, 1954). Each step is outlined in the following sections.

Step 1: Ascertaining the General Aims of the Activity Being Studied.

Determining the general aims of the activity being studied is achieved by answering the following two questions: “a) what is the objective of the activity? and b) what is the person expected to accomplish who engages in this activity?” (Butterfield, et al., 2005, p. 478). The study intended to investigate the police officer’s perceived identity processes, including the factors that helped, hindered, and might have helped the process of maintaining multiple identity roles.
**Step 2: Making Plans and Setting Specifications.**

I pre-screened potential participants by asking “Have you worked continuously as a police officer for the last five years?” This question attempted to determine if the potential participant had worked in the policing profession for an adequate amount of time to be subjected to the tendency to narrow his or her identity. I also inquired if the potential participant was content with the number of his or her identity roles. This helped to identify participants who were not experiencing role strain. If the potential participant answered in the affirmative to both questions, he or she was included in the study. All potential participants who contacted me met the inclusion criteria, answering in the affirmative to the above questions.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with participants using interview protocols created for this study (see Appendices F and G). Interviews were conducted over the phone. Previous research has demonstrated that phone interviews produced reliable participant responses (Borgen, Butterfield, & Amundson, 2010; Buchanan & Keats, 2011). The interview protocol contains a few general questions about the participants’ work, identity roles, satisfaction level with identity roles, and identity processes to provide the context for each participant’s work situation and identity roles. Asking contextual questions seemed to ease the participants into the interview process by allowing them to talk about their work and their identity in a topical manner, if they wished. Not only did the contextual portion of the interview ease participants into the interview, it also provided a background for the analysis of the CIT interview data, which is consistent with the ECIT methodology (Butterfield et al., 2009). Participants were provided an operational definition for the concept *broad identity* to promote uniformity in the understanding of this concept across participants. The operational definition provided for *broad identity* was enjoying a range of occupational, social and personal roles. Identity roles was also
defined at the start of the interview as the meanings a person attributes to the self as an object in particular interactional settings (Burke & Tully, 1977). To aid participants in understanding this abstract concept, general examples such as “parent, partner, community member, volunteer, coach” were provided. The contextual portion of the interview included the following questions:

1) Tell me about your work.

2) What are your identity roles?

3) On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with the identity roles you just described?

4) Is there anything that would make them better? If so, what would that be?

5) Have these identity roles changed since you began policing?
   a) If so, how have they changed?

6) If you had to pick an identity role as more important than the others, which one would it be and why?

The contextual portion of the interview protocol was followed by the CIT portion of the interview which is designed to elicit critical incidents and wish lists items. Participants were asked “What helps you maintain a broad identity?” This question was followed by the question “What hinders your ability to maintain a broad identity?” Lastly, participants were asked “What might help you maintain a broad identity, if it were available?” Additional probing questions were necessary to facilitate the identification of the critical incidents. Probing questions included “How is it helpful / hindering?”, “Can you give me an example of how it helped / hindered / might help?” and “How is that important?”. Many of the participants struggled with the third CIT question of what might help them maintain a broad identity if it were available. After a few
interviews where I noticed the pattern of difficulty, I began adding an additional probe to facilitate the participants’ understanding and contemplation of the question. I asked them to reconsider the incidents they stated as hindering to determine if anything could be changed to lessen the hindrance. I then asked them if there was anything about the helping factors that could be built upon to help them even more if something were available. This additional probing facilitated some of the participants’ identification of wish list items as we revisited the aforementioned helping and hindering items.

The ECIT interviews spanned between 25 to 112 minutes with an average of 54 minutes per interview. At the beginning of the interview, demographic information was collected from the participants in order to describe the sample. Demographic information collected included the participants’ age, marital status, parental status, combined household income, country of origin, highest level of education, years of police service, and police rank. The demographic information was collected on a form titled Participant Demographic Information (see Appendix E).

I created a second interview protocol which was used to perform the participant cross-checking credibility check (see Appendix H). Second interview questions were those suggested by Butterfield et al., (2009):

1) Are the helping / hindering CIs and WL items correct?

2) Is anything missing?

3) Is there anything that needs revising?

4) Do you have any other comments?
5) Do the category headings make sense to you?

6) Do the category headings capture your experience and the meaning that the incident or factor had for you?

7) Are there any incidents in the categories that do not appear to fit from your perspective? If so, where do you think they belong? (pp. 276-277)

The execution and rationale of the second interview will be discussed further in the section pertaining to credibility checks.

All of the interviews were conducted by me and were recorded using a digital voice recorder. Handwritten notes were also taken during the interview to aid me in using probing questions. All audio files, handwritten notes, consent and pre-screening forms were kept in a locked safe in my home until such time that they can be taken to the research lab at UBC to be placed in a locked file cabinet.

Audio files were submitted to a professional transcriptionist who had demonstrated high quality transcription work in my previous research projects. The transcriptionist signed a confidentiality contract (Appendix I), indicating that she would not disclose the contents of the interviews and that the audio and typed files must be kept in a locked filing cabinet or safe to maintain the confidentiality of the participants and their interview contents.

**Step 3: Collecting the Data.**

Data collection was achieved with 21 interviews utilizing the aforementioned interview protocols with police officers across Canada and the United States. Interviews were conducted via telephone following the receipt of signed consent forms as outlined in the participant
recruitment section. The interviews were conducted via telephone due to the majority (17 of 21) of the participants living in geographic areas outside of the Vancouver lower mainland area. The three officers in the Vancouver lower mainland area indicated a preference for a phone interview to accommodate their schedule and privacy. Phone interviews were conducted from a private setting, my home office, to safeguard the confidentiality of participants. Participants were encouraged to select a place that was quiet and private for them to participate in the phone interview. Most chose their office at work and indicated that they had closed the door to afford them privacy during the interview process.

Participants retained a copy of the consent form for their records and I kept the signed copy in an electronic file on my personal computer protected by a secure password. The consent form was discussed with each participant prior to the start of the interview, highlighting the participant’s right to withdraw consent, decline to answer any questions, and discontinue the interview at any time. The participant was given an opportunity to ask any questions prior to the start of the interview process. Upon satisfying the participant’s questions, demographic information was collected using the Participant Demographic Form and then the audio recording was started to begin the interview process. I began by collecting contextual and CIT data using the interview protocol. In the interest of consistency, I adhered to the questions contained in the interview protocol, including the use of pre-designated probing and clarifying questions. In the interest of thoroughness, participants were asked “what else?” to determine if there were additional helping, hindering, or might help incidents.

At the conclusion of the interviews, participants were asked if they had any questions. Participants were also asked about interest in receiving a summary report of the study upon its completion. Participants were advised that the summary report would have identifying
information removed, as would any documents submitted for publication. Preferred mailing or email addresses were collected directing the summary report for participants who indicated interest in obtaining a copy. Participants were reminded of their right to withdraw their consent to participate in the study and the options for withdrawal: withdraw but have data retained and used, destroyed, or personally rendered to the participant. Participants were reminded that there would be a second interview where the participant will have an opportunity to ask any questions or provide any additional thoughts that may have arisen in the interim.

As stated in the previous section, all raw data, including audio recording, notes, consent forms, and demographic forms were kept in a double-locked safe in my home office until they were able to be moved to a locked cabinet at the research offices of UBC. Audio files were uploaded to a secure password protected server to facilitate transmission to the transcriber. She was granted access to the audio files by an electronic invitation system that restricts access solely to the registered invitee. Access to the data was restricted to me, my dissertation committee members, two independent extractors for the credibility checks, and a professional transcriptionist. The data will be destroyed after five years following the successful defense of the dissertation or its publication, whichever occurs later. Data will be destroyed by deleting electronic documents and personally shredding the paper documents or having them shredded by a professional shredding service.

**Step 4: Analyzing the Data.**

Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed in order to facilitate analysis of the data. Data analysis was conducted according to the steps outlined by Flanagan (1954) and Butterfield et al. (2009). The first step entailed determining the frame of reference for the study.
The frame of reference was informed by the literature review conducted prior to the commencement of data collection. Consistent with this frame of reference, data was collected to aid in understanding how the police culture, personal dispositions, and organizational practices impacted the identity processes of police officers. It was hoped that illuminating these factors would stimulate additional research questions and studies to augment existing identity, career, and policing theories. More comprehensive theories, in turn, could inform organizational practices to promote better work-life balance through a broad identity. The second step was to group similar incidents into categories. This step involved organizing raw data, identifying critical incidents and wish list items, and creating the categories. The third step entailed determining the level of detail needed to report the data (Butterfield et al., 2009). Step two is described next.

**Organizing Raw Data.** Data was organized using a word document for each component of the interviews. Responses to contextual questions, along with helping factors, hindering factors, and wish list items were colour coded using the highlight function of the word processing program to distinguish each form of data.

**Identifying the Critical Incident and Wish List Items.** I randomly selected three interviews to begin the data analysis process following the steps outlined by Flanagan (1954). Interviews were randomly selected so that interviews conducted at various times in the data collection process have an equal chance of being selected. Randomly selecting interviews at the onset of the data analysis process hopefully mitigated potential variations in interview quality that occurs with interviewing experience. First the helping critical incidents were extracted from the first interview, followed by the hindering critical incidents, and lastly the wish list items. This process was repeated with the second and third interview. Once all the critical incident
items and wish list items had been extracted from the first three randomly selected interviews, I began to put them into categories.

Flanagan (1954) suggested that the credibility of a recalled story could be determined by the level of detail the participant offers. The more detail provided, the more credible is the participant’s account. In order for an account to be included in the proposed study, three criteria must have been met: (a) presence of antecedent information, (b) a detailed description of the experience, and (c) a description of the incident outcome (Butterfield, et al., 2009). These criteria are designed to mitigate some of the concerns related to the use of retrospective self-report.

**Creating the Categories.** A text document was created for each participant where helping critical incidents, hindering critical incidents, and wish list items were listed under their respective headings according to procedures established by Butterfield et al. (2009). Data was manually extracted by copying and pasting items from the transcription word document into separate documents for helping critical incidents, hindering critical incidents, and wish list items. These documents were used to examine the helping critical incidents to determine any patterns, by attending to the similarities and differences. Discovered patterns formed the basis for the creation of categories. Critical incidents and wish list items were placed into existing categories or formed the basis for new categories, where appropriate.

Hindering critical incidents and wish list items followed the procedure outlined above with helping critical incidents. This process was repeated in batches of three interviews for all but 10% of the interviews, according to the ECIT data analysis procedure. Once categories had been established, the final 10% of the interviews were reviewed to extract the critical incidents
and wish list items and place them in the categories (Butterfield, et al., 2009). Flanagan’s (1954) threshold for exhaustiveness was reached at the point when new categories stop being created. Categories were modified to accommodate additional data. Decisions pertaining to merging or splitting categories were made according to the meaning of the data and their distinctiveness from other data (Butterfield, et al., 2009). Categories did not need to be collapsed and merged to satisfy the 25% participation rate. Only one category did not satisfy the 25% participation rate but the data was distinct from other categories so it was not merged with another category. The participation rate requirement is discussed in more detail in the next section.

**Step 5: Interpreting the Data and Reporting the Results.** The analysis of data phase involves the potential for researcher bias due to the number of choices I had to make in identifying and categorizing the data. Even the selection of questions in the interview protocol and the pre-screening questionnaire may have influenced the direction of the responses. To counter the potential for bias, the nine credibility checks suggested by Butterfield et al. (2009) were employed. These credibility checks are discussed next.

The first credibility check supports the descriptive validity of the study. This was accomplished by audio recording the interviews and having the interviews transcribed. Transcriptions were checked against the original audio recordings (Butterfield, et al., 2009). Interview fidelity, the second credibility check, is designed to ensure that the researcher is adhering to the CIT protocol (Butterfield et al., 2009). A CIT expert was asked to listen to a sample of audio recordings from interviews to determine if I adhered to the interview protocol and abstained from leading the participant’s answers. A fellow doctoral student versed in the ECTT methodology was provided the audio recordings from the first three interviews to review
for interview fidelity. She indicated that I had adhered to the interview protocol and did not lead participants in the manner I asked questions.

The third credibility check calls for the independent review and extraction of critical incidents and wish list items from 25% of the transcripts (Butterfield et al., 2009). The concordance rate of critical incident extractions between myself and the independent extractor was calculated. The concordance rate achieved was 100% following a discussion of initial disparities. The disparities involved the independent extractor’s identification of two additional critical incidents. The higher the concordance rate, the more credible the identification of the critical incidents are and the more significance they have to the aim of the activity being studied.

Adequate coverage of the domain under examination is ensured by the fourth credibility check. To achieve this objective, the data was reviewed to establish the point at which exhaustiveness occurs (Flanagan, 1954; Woolsey, 1986). Flanagan (1954) suggested that data be tracked to the point at which no new categories emerge from the critical incidents and wish list items. In accordance with Flanagan, the data was tracked until no new categories emerged.

The fifth credibility check involves calculating the participation rate for each incident. I used the minimum of 25% as suggested by Borgen and Amundson (1984). This participation rate required the participation of at least six participants, which is 29% of the total number of participants. One category fell slightly short of meeting the minimum of 25%, with five participants with a participation rate of 24%. The higher the participation rate, the more important this incident was deemed to be to the overall study (Flanagan, 1954).

I requested an independent judge to place 25% of the randomly selected critical incidents into the tentative categories I had created to satisfy the sixth credibility check. The independent
judge was a doctoral student who was familiar with the ECIT methodology through her experience as a research assistant. A high level of agreement between the independent judge’s and my categorization was sought, at a suggested rate of 80% or higher (Andersson & Nilsson, 1964; Flanagan, 1954). A word document containing the category names and operational definitions and a word document containing a random selection of 25% of the extractions from each category was given to the independent judge for examination. The independent judge was also asked to determine if the operational definitions were clear and reflected her knowledge of the concept. Initially, the independent judge categorized some of the critical incidents into categories that were different than mine. Upon rereading the transcript, I agreed with three of her recategorizations and made these changes. With regard to the remaining disparities, I provided the independent judge with additional transcript excerpts surrounding the critical incidents while relaying my chosen categorizations. Given this additional information, the independent judge indicated agreement with my categorizations resulting in an agreement rate of 100% between the independent judge’s and my categorizations.

Participant cross-checking, the seventh credibility check, consisted of conducting a second interview with all of the participants to allow them the opportunity to offer their feedback regarding the interpretation of their responses and the formulation of the tentative categories (Butterfield et al., 2009). The second interview treats participants as experts on their own experiences (Fontana & Frey, 2000). It also permits follow up with questions that may emerge from analyzing the data from the initial interview. The second interview was conducted over the phone, or via email, depending on the preference of the participant, and was not recorded or transcribed. Participants were sent a document that contained the placement of their critical incidents and wish list items into categories as well as category definitions. The second
interview entailed asking four questions suggested by Butterfield et al. (2009) relating to the identification of critical incidents and wish list items:

1. Are the helping/hindering critical incidents and wish list items correct?

2. Is anything missing?

3. Is there anything that needs revising?

4. Do you have any other comments? (p. 276)

Context from the transcript was provided to the participant in the event of a question or disagreement of the identification and/or placements of critical incidents or wish list items. Ultimate decisions with regard to identification and/or placement of critical incidents and wish list items was deferred to the judgment of the participant. It is important that participants feel their experiences are adequately represented (Butterfield et al., 2005). Additionally, the participant was asked the following questions:

1. Do the category headings make sense to you?

2. Do the category headings capture your experience and the meaning that the incident or factor had for you?

3. Are there any incidents in the categories that do not appear to fit from your perspectives? If so, where do you think they belong? (Butterfield et al., 2009, p. 277)

The second interview was also an opportunity to gather information that may have been missing from the initial interview. Participants indicated their agreement with the operational definitions, as written. They also indicated overall agreement with how their data was
interpreted and categorized. A few participants indicated that, upon reading their transcripts and reflecting on their interview that they could identify some minor changes. In total, during the second interview participants identified one additional helping incident, one wish list item eliminated as the participant indicated it was a repeat of another item, and three changes in categorization of their responses. Two participants did not respond to requests for second interviews. One participant declined to participate, stating that he was on disability leave.

Tentative categories were submitted to experts in the field to satisfy the eighth credibility check (Butterfield et al., 2005; Butterfield et al., 2009). Two retired police officers who are practicing psychologists were selected as experts for review of the categories and operational definitions to determine if they seem consistent with their experience of policing. Both experts were asked the following questions:

1. Based upon your experience in police work, do the categories seem consistent with your expectations?

2. Do the categories seem to be comprehensive?

3. Are there any categories that surprise you?

4. Are the operational definitions clear, understandable, and useful?

One expert recommended refinement of the category pertaining to participants’ values and personal standards for living / parental influence. The original category name, personality, did not seem to be the most accurate descriptive title for the critical incidents contained in that category. The other expert and I concurred with this modification. Once this category was renamed and the definition refined to reflect a more accurate description of the category, critical
incidents from another category, titled parental values, was able to be subsumed under the new category. Another suggested modification was the addition of the word “operational” to the category named “stress”. This addition also seemed to enhance the clarity and comprehensiveness of the operational definition and category. All other category names and definitions were deemed to accurately reflect the experts’ experiences of policing.

Theoretical validity was addressed by the ninth (last) credibility check. I compared my explicit assumptions about the study to relevant scholarly research to see if the assumptions are supported. A review of the literature will also be conducted in search of support for the tentative categories. If support is not found for a category, it will not be assumed to indicate a lack of theoretical validity but that new information was uncovered in the study (Butterfield et al., 2005).

**Contextual Data Analysis**

Contextual data was analyzed according to the six phases outlined in the explanation of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006). The six phases include (a) familiarizing yourself with the data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and (f) producing the report. Familiarization with the data occurred through reading and rereading the transcripts, looking for patterns (Step 1). Once these patterns were determined, the data was collated according to the pattern (Step 2). A word document was created for extracted data, including relevant information surrounding the contextual data.

Coded and collated data was reviewed for overarching themes (Step 3). Tentative themes were considered for coherence and meaningfulness of the data to ensure the themes were distinct from each other (Step 4). Resulting themes were compared against the entire data set to
determine if they were representative of the whole data set. This allowed missed data to be incorporated into existing themes. The resulting themes accurately reflected the data set. Therefore, recoding of the data set was not necessary.

The essence of each theme is depicted with a written detailed analysis of each theme (Step 5). A final report was constructed to detail the story told by the data (Step 6). Participants’ stories are reflected with the incorporation of data extracts in the final report. In the next chapter, I present the results of the analyzed interviews including representative excerpts.
Chapter 4: Results

This chapter begins with an outline of the results of the contextual portion of the interview. Following the contextual data, the resulting categorization of data from the critical incident interviews will be offered. Representative interview excerpts will be included in the presentation of the resulting categories. Discussion of contextual and critical incident categories will be presented in the subsequent chapter.

Contextual Data

I asked participants to tell me about their work and their identity roles so that I would have a background to their responses to CIT questions. Initially, participants responded to questions about their work by orienting me to their current assignment, including their daily tasks and responsibilities. I probed further to learn of their personal experience of their work and learned that the majority of them loved the work they do (81%). One participant stated “I love my work. I always wanted to do this and (I’ve) been loving every minute of it for the last seven and a half years” (Participant 8). Participants also endorsed liking their co-workers and other people they meet as part of their fondness for the job (24%).

In addition to loving their work, several participants indicated that the job kept them very busy, offering a variety of experiences (67%). One participant stated “I think I’m well suited for my job because I really thrive on being busy. When I’m at work, I’m inundated completely every day, every hour. There’s always stuff coming in” and added “I wear a lot of hats” (Participant 18). Another participant reflected “There’s always things to do. There’s always projects that need work and such but it’s not overwhelming so I am really enjoying my job and I like the diversity of this job” (Participant 2).
Another theme identified by 52% of the participants (11 of 21) was that they had recently transferred into their current position. Some transfers were promotions while others were lateral transfers between patrol and specialized units. For some, the transfer was accompanied by a need to augment their skills to perform the role (27%). One participant stated

It’s a challenge because it’s a new position. There’s a lot of learning curve to go there and I’m able to do things I couldn’t do as a sergeant- go to meetings and interact with some of the people that I didn’t interact with before so I’m able to learn from them and that’s helpful (Participant 20).

Five participants identified administrative duties as a large part of their work (24%). These participants identified as being in supervisory roles ranging from acting sergeant to chief. One participant observed

It’s a lot different than “policing policing” because even my assignment before this where I was deputy was very hands on just because of how the department was structured. Here it’s more politician / administrator with an emphasis on the politician side (Participant 13).

Participants identified several administrative duties such as managing relationships, employee well-being, discipline, policy, and managing budget as part of their police role. Table 1 depicts a summary of the themes that emerged from participants’ description of their work.
Table 1.

Themes Related to Participants’ View of Their Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Participation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loves the Work</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busy / Variety of Work</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers / Promotions</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning the Job</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Duties</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likes People / Co-Workers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to the second question inquiring of the participants’ identity roles, participants identified a total of 211 identity roles. The mean number of roles was 10 and the range spanned from 5-18 roles. Identified roles were categorized as follows: family, police work-related, social, interest-based, community, non-police professional and personal roles. An example of a social role was the friend role. A hockey player is an example of an interest-based role. An example of a personal role was the participant’s ethnic identity. Table 2 reflects the roles identified by participants.

Table 2.

Categorization of Participants’ Identity Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Participation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police-Work Related</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest-Based</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Police Professional</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants indicated their level of satisfaction with their identity roles using a scale of 0-10 with “0” representing the least satisfied and “10” representing the highest level of satisfaction. Participants’ ratings averaged 8.6, the range spanned from 7 to 10. Their satisfaction levels were further explored with an inquiry as to what would make their satisfaction level higher. Having more time to perform roles was the most common response regarding what participants believed would increase their satisfaction levels (38%). Three participants reported that being more skilled in performing their roles would improve their satisfaction with them (14%). Three participants cited more supportive policies and procedures at work would make them more satisfied with their roles (14%). These responses seem to be a preview of the wish list items cited at the end of the interview. The remainder of the responses varied and included having a better understanding of current societal values, having a family, being more centrally located to extended family, having more energy, being self-reflective, and having a desirable retirement job option.

All but two participants indicated that their identity roles had changed (90%). Some added that they felt the identity role changes were natural progressions or evolutions over time. Participants elaborated on how their identity roles have changed since they began policing. Nine participants reported a shift from a focus on their police role to non-police roles, which included both family and community roles (43%). One participant related

I think that probably in the beginning the only thing that I was interested in being identified as was a police officer. And now it’s almost entirely flipped where everything else I do is almost more important. I mean I like my job. I love my job. I love doing it when I am there but I think everything else I do is how I’d rather be defined. (Participant 6)
Six participants indicated that they assumed more responsibility at work, which, at times, included a rise in rank (29%). Five participants indicated that they got married and/or had children since they began policing (24%). Three participants cited psychological changes which included stress, closing off from family, and feeling a loss of self, resulting in a shift in interests (14%). One participant stated

I’m more able to function now, but it took a lot of my ability to function certainly dynamically in my own mind in a way, so I’ve had memory loss. I’ve had and I still have issues regarding that so it’s changed my interests really. I kind of had to rejig my interests. (Participant 3)

Eight participants identified the collective family unit, consisting of both the parent role and partner role, as being the most important identity role (38%). Their family members were considered the most important people in their lives and were considered extensions of them. Six identified being a parent as the most important identity role (29%). Participants cited reasons such as children depending on them, being a role model for their children, and their children being the most important people to them. Four identified being a partner as the most significant identity role (19%). Participants cited the loss of this role as being most impactful on them. Additionally, one participant stated that the partner role is “. . . like being one part of something bigger” (Participant 3). Two participants indicated that being a police officer was the most important role (10%). One participant stated that the police career was most important because it allowed him to provide for his family (Participant 8). Another participant identified the police role because he is labeled by others with this role as primary and he believes this role impacts all of his other roles (Participant 16). One participant identified the role of daughter as most important to her (5%). She relayed that she came to appreciate her family because of her
exposure to other families on the job. In total, family was cited as being the most important role by 90% of the participants, which included identification of the parent, partner, the parent/partner unit, and daughter role.

**Critical Incident Categories**

For the critical incident portion of the first interview, participants were asked the following questions: “What helps you maintain a broad identity?”, “What hinders your ability to maintain a broad identity?” and “What might help you maintain a broad identity, if it were available?”. Participants’ responses resulted in 23 critical incident categories where 17 of the categories met the 25% participation rate, 2 categories fell just short of the 25% with a 24% participation rate, while the remaining 4 categories were considered to be reflective of outlier responses. These 23 categories were comprised of a total of 400 critical incidents; 221 helping incidents (55.25% of the total), 126 hindering incidents (31.5% of the total), and 53 wish list items (13.25% of the total). The majority of helping incidents was expected since the study sample was comprised of police officers who identified as maintaining a broad identity. The resulting categories, the numerical breakdown of critical incidents, and participation rates are depicted in Table 3. The categories are listed beginning with the helping categories followed by the hindering categories. Several categories were comprised of helping, hindering and wish list items. Therefore, categories were determined to be helping or hindering on the basis of the participation rates for helping or hindering incidents within the category. There are 14 helping categories, 12 of which met the suggested 25% participation rate. There are eight hindering categories, five of which met the suggested participation rate. One category was equal in its composition of helping and hindering incidents. The resulting categories are organized in descending order, beginning with the category with the highest participation rate. All data were
able to be placed into an appropriate category. Two categories were one percent below the suggested 25% participation rate but were deemed to be close enough to the recommended percentage and were distinct from other categories, warranting their inclusion in this report as separate categories. Four categories fell considerably below the recommended participation rate of 25% with participation rates of 19%, 14%, and 10% but are included due to the distinctive nature of the critical incidents within the categories.

Table 3.

Critical Incident Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Incident</th>
<th>Helping (n=221)</th>
<th>Hindering (n=126)</th>
<th>Wish List Items (n=53)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
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<td>P %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helping</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Values &amp; Personal Standards / Parental Influence</td>
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<td>81</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regrettable Experience</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Support</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsibility to Others</td>
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<td>57</td>
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<td>Category</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helping / Hindering</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Situation</td>
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</table>

* Denotes less than 25% participation rate

**Helping Categories**

There were 14 helping categories with 12 of these categories meeting the 25% suggested participation rate. A discussion of each category follows.

**Values and Personal Standards for Living /Parental Influence**

For this category, 17 (81%) participants identified 35 helping incidents. Five (24%) participants also identified 9 hindering incidents. There were no wish list items cited in this category. For this study, the category *Values and personal standards for living /Parental*
influence entails the participants’ identified values, living standards, outlook, faith and demeanor and the proactive measures they take to live according to their values and life goals. It also refers to the belief that their lifestyle reflects on their upbringing and the desire to have a life that reflects favorably on their parents. It also includes the lifestyle lessons and values learned from their parents. Examples of participants’ values included a sense of their obligation and loyalty to others in general that came from their upbringing, which they indicated they were trying to honor. One participant relayed:

I’m blessed with having a decent upbringing despite the problems that people have as children and adults. I had a good start in life. I guess in retrospect I look back and say I had a good chance, I’m not about to ruin it and I’m not gonna betray the work that other people did to bring me where I’m at, so I feel indebted to people that have helped me in the past. (Participant 3)

For another participant, it was his observation of his mother’s work ethic that instilled a value of community in him, which has translated to his participation in roles in his community. He stated

That was a value I learnt from my mother who was a town clerk for 30 years that you go above and beyond public service. That was a great value that I learnt from her. People would call up in a panic. They’re leaving on their trip in the morning and they don’t have a voter registration card or whatever they need and my mother would be like I’ll see you at the town hall in 15 minutes and we’d ride with my mother. (Participant 1)

Another participant spoke of how her positive outlook on life assisted her in maintaining a broad identity, stating
I have a general positive outlook on life. I think I just always try to be the best person I can in anything that I do. I try to be the best wife I can be. I have a strong work ethic at work and I always strive to ensure that I’m a positive senior constable at work. I just think well we should all try to do the best we can in every avenue and be happy with what we have, because there’s other people that don’t choose. (Participant 11)

For another participant, prayer helped her to maintain participation in various life roles which had been causing her strain. When asked what helps her maintain a broad identity, she responded

A lot of praying. I mean just literally knowing that this too shall pass. Praying basically helps me center and gives me that relief to basically say I’m not in control of it, so stop stressing over it and know that there is something greater out there and put it in the Lord’s hands. So the prayer just helps me remember that. (Participant 9)

Another participant explained how she has taken a proactive approach to spending time with her husband, participating in her wife role

It just comes the point in time where I have to say to my kids that I’m going away for a few days and you’re not coming and just to get away from everything and just concentrate on us. I’ve learned that that’s really important, a thing that I need to do and not something that I used to do. (Participant 14)

**Regrettable Experience**

For this category, 14 (67%) participants identified 24 helping incidents. Five (24%) participants also identified 5 hindering incidents. No wish list items were reported for this category. For this study, regrettable experience involves negative events that participants
personally experienced, witnessed, or learned about which influenced participants’ work-life balance behaviours.

Participants’ awareness of regrettable experiences was the second largest helping factor. Many participants indicated that they learned vicariously through the experiences of others to maintain their broad identity. One participant described how listening to the difficulties and coping strategies of other officers influenced his choices about managing a life outside of policing:

I think it’s kind of set apart that growing up my parent’s friends were all police officers with the service and just being a teenager and growing up with them, talking to their own experiences and how they dealt with their own stresses and how they were able to see a fatality with multiple families, but still go home at the end of the night and still be sane and can actually be personable with everybody. (Participant 8)

Another officer spoke of his awareness of how other police officers suffered due to the narrowing of their identities to the police role, stating

Once they were disconnected from the police they lost all that and I saw it impact their physical well-being and emotional well-being, their mental well-being and it was almost sad like to see them trying to hang on to it. When they died they were trying to hang on to that. In the process they had made the job number one and so when their kids grew up and moved on, it’s like the song Cat’s in the Cradle. (Participant 13)

Another participant spoke of how he lost his interest and participation in activities during a difficult period
Those 10 years was a result of me not looking after me; me looking after other people.
My interest dropped. I just kind of went through the motions pretending I was interested.
I really wasn’t. I didn’t deal with things. (Participant 3)

**Family Support**

For this category, 14 (67%) participants identified 23 helping incidents. Two (10%) participants identified 3 hindering incidents. One (5%) participant identified 1 wish list item. For this study, family support includes emotional and practical support offered by intimate partners, children and extended family. This category also includes the absence of this support.

Participants spoke of how family members encourage them to maintain various life roles. Sometimes the encouragement came from family members inquiring about participants’ non-police activities while other times they are inviting the participant to engage in a family role. One participant spoke of how her family urges her to maintain her family roles, stating

My daughter has always been good at approaching me and she goes “Mom I need some mom time. We need to go out for coffee or we need to go shopping or something.” My husband’s more of the planner than I am in terms of trips and stuff. (Participant 2)

Another participant spoke of how his wife supports him in his activities outside of family, stating “My wife keeps me on the straight and narrow. We do a lot of things together, but anything that I do outside of our family life she supports and that helps me maintain my identity.” (Participant 4)

For some participants, family support meant the practical assistance they received in managing their responsibilities. One participant explained how this support helped him: “My wife and I are good at sharing responsibility. She’s very flexible and able to support my work, which sometimes interferes with that role as a parent. I just can’t always be available to the
family.” (Participant 7) Another participant identified her son’s emotional and practical assistance with her university coursework as helping her to maintain her student and parental roles, stating “He encourages me in school. In fact he helps me with school.” (Participant 9)

The absence of family support was considered hindering for one participant. Not having some of her family nearby interfered with the participant’s ability to participate in her family role of providing and receiving support from extended family. She stated “Distance certainly affects that role, being caught between wanting to be here for my family and my husband and kids over my family in Calgary.” (Participant 2) This participant also spoke of the absence of support in managing some of the household tasks, stating “When you move to a new house there’s lots of tasks to get done in settling in and that is more my role than anyone’s role.”

One participant indicated that he wished he had more understanding and support from family members with respect to the demands of his job. He relayed “it would be great if my brother and sister-in-law had some kind of understanding of what it is and what I do.” (Participant 10)

**Responsibility to Others**

Twelve (57%) participants identified 18 helping incidents in this category. Seven (33%) participants identified 11 hindering incidents. One (5%) participant identified 1 wish list item. For this study, responsibility to others refers to the participants’ awareness of the impact of their behaviours on dependent others such as children, intimate partners, and co-workers. It also includes purposeful modeling of desirable behaviour for the benefit of others.

One participant relayed a story of how a reminder of his responsibility to his daughter helped him to maintain a broad identity
We won this in court and it’s going to impact nationally (and) my daughter says “That’s nice dad, but you missed my swimming lesson. You’re in big trouble. You don’t get dessert.” She was only three or four at the time, but it just sort of grounds you that no matter how big of an accomplishment you think you’ve done at work, you’re dad first. (Participant 13)

Another participant relayed his sense of responsibility to be committed to his role as a rugby player, stating

The feeling as though other people are relying on me helps me keep those roles too. For example if I don’t show up to drop-in rugby then they’re gonna be short a player and so they might wind up playing with odd numbers and if you’re playing with odd numbers then someone’s constantly gonna be on the sideline because I didn’t show up. So I feel like I have a responsibility to other people. (Participant 16)

Responsibility to others also hindered participants’ abilities to maintain a broad identity. Some participants spoke of how the demanding nature of parental roles interfered with their ability to perform other roles, such as participating in their own hobbies. One participant explained

One of my roles was very demanding with working with my son, so I think that my husband doesn’t have the patience for it. It’s quite a demanding role. It’s a frustrating role. It is rewarding at sometimes and then you have your ups and downs so it’s an emotional role I guess. (Participant 2)

Others indicated that their commitment to helping others interfered with their time to perform other roles. Participant 3 relayed
My problem is I try to take everybody else’s problems on as my own. That bleeds into my own time where, especially with the association stuff, I get the look from my wife “Could you just put your phone away?”

This same participant also identified having children as a wish list item, stating that if they had been able to have children he felt it would have enhanced his performance of roles because he would feel a sense of responsibility to his children to maintain a broad identity.

**Work Perspective**

Nine (43%) participants identified 16 helping incidents in this category. There were no hindering incidents or wish list items cited by participants in this category. For this study, work perspective signifies the participants’ stance regarding their work or work identity as it relates to their whole identity.

For some of the participants, their perspective about their work shifted with their years of service. One participant discussed how her perspective regarding her work role helped her to maintain a broad identity, stating

I think that probably in the beginning the only thing that I was interested in being identified as was as a police officer. And now it’s almost entirely flipped where everything else I do is almost more important. I mean I like my job. I love my job. I love doing it when I am there, but I think it’s probably way more important… everything else I do is how I’d rather be defined. (Participant 6)

Another participant echoed how her view also shifted with experience, relaying
I think that a big thing too with keeping multiple identity roles is I think the novelty wears off too. I mean it’s exciting to be a police officer at first and you’re doing everything you want to do and you see on TV and then the realities kind of set in. So it’s like okay well this is my role and you realize that if you keep going at a certain pace you’re gonna wear yourself out and as much as it’s a job and a career, it’s also got to be balanced with other things. (Participant 18)

One participant spoke of how her view of her work differs from others, stating “Policing, as you know, it’s a career for a lot of people. Yes, it’s a career, but to me it’s also just a job, it’s not my life.” (Participant 18) Another participant echoed her sentiment, stating

I refuse to let… I’ve never let policing be my whole identity. If we could embrace our multiple roles I think you know collectively we bring so much as people to the profession rather than what the profession brings to people. (Participant 13)

Another participant summed up his stance regarding his work role, stating

I don’t think that job is so important that it’s like… some people use it as an end of chapter and they give themselves heart attacks over it. My ideal last day of work is leaving the keys to everything. (Participant 3)

Non-police Support

For this category, nine (43%) participants cited 12 helping incidents. Additionally, one (5%) participant cited 2 hindering incidents. No wish list items were identified in this category.

For this study, non-police support refers to the emotional and practical support offered by friends who are not employed in police services.
One participant related his thoughts about how maintaining friendships outside of police work helped him to keep a balanced perspective, stating:

. . . (When) the relationships you have with people outside of work are actually coworkers and you’re not at work you’re talking about work and over time you start believing that everybody in the entire world goes the way of the small percentage of the population that we deal with and then you get the us versus them mentality and you get extremely cynical and everybody’s a scumbag and everybody lies. Well I never fell into that trap, because of the relationships that I had outside of the organization. So that when I left work I didn’t talk about work and even in the small number of police officers that I do hang out with when we’re not at work, we don’t discuss work. (Participant 5)

Another participant spoke of how having friends outside of policing helps him to stay grounded and perform other roles, stating

I’d have to say a good scope of different friends. I have not just only friends with the service, but I have friends outside that don’t even have anything to do with policing. It helps to me keep myself grounded. (I) realize that it’s not seven days a week, 365 days a year of policing and now that when I leave work I can go hang out with friends and we’re not even gonna bring up anything to do with policing, so it helps me not think about it, not stress about anything and allow me to do whatever role at that time I’m doing.

( Participant 8)

One participant spoke of the difficulty of maintaining a broad identity due to the absence of non-police friendships she left behind after being relocated for work. She also spoke of how
the non-friendly community she lived in made it difficult to develop new friendships, limiting her performance of the friend role. (Participant 2)

**Prioritization / Organization**

For this category, nine (43%) participants identified 10 helping incidents. Additionally, two (10%) participants identified 2 hindering incidents. No wish list items were identified in this category. For this study, prioritization / organization represents the participants’ attempt to manage the balance of role performances based on their identification of needs, urgency, and importance with a finite amount of time and energy.

One participant, speaking of her and her police husband’s prioritization of their roles, stated “We try and set you know priorities as to not taking too much call out. We always ensure that we have our time together is first and foremost and then everything else comes after that.” (Participant 11) Another participant spoke of how her prioritization evolved in her career, stating

> I’ve learned how to balance that a little bit better. We keep everything in check. I have learned how to take time for just me and my husband. I’ve learned how to say no at work. I didn’t spend the time on that the first time around. I was so driven that there was nothing of that. I wanted to do this, this and this by this, this and this date. I really look at the cost now whereas before it was almost I didn’t look at the big picture before. I think again back with my career I basically would take on any task that was assigned to me. (Participant 14)

For one participant, her prioritization of her roles actually limited her roles. This participant stated
I could be more involved in things but choose not to be. I could be the soccer mom that arranges the pizza parties at Christmas and the pizza parties at the end of the year or getting involved in PAC and stuff. I have chosen not to take on those roles. (Participant 2).

**Psycho-education Regarding Policing / Professional Support**

For this category, eight (38%) participants identified 12 helping incidents. There were no hindering incidents cited. Five (24%) participants identified 7 wish list items. For this study, psycho-education regarding policing / professional support refers to the provision of information regarding the maintenance of mental health as a police officer as well as the emotional and practical support participants receive from other professionals such as counsellors, university professors, and child care workers.

One participant relayed how training helped him to maintain balance, stating

> The service has done a really good job in providing courses in wellness and how to deal with stress properly through our psych services department, so I think all those combined have really helped me where I am now. They did key on little things that you can help like strategies, techniques. (Participant 8)

Another participant relayed how what he learned about maintaining a broad identity while policing helped him, stating

> I’d say a greater understanding of the health of maintaining a broad identity through education. I was of course made aware of all the downfalls and pitfalls of just maintaining the identity of a police officer essentially and how it can relate to everything
from depression to alienating the organization from the community as a whole.

(Participant 16)

A wish list item identified in this category was one participant’s wish that there was education on generational differences in policing as it related to work ethic and connection to the community. This participant suggested

I think if there’s some way of educating especially with the younger folks. I think something that would help is that people just have an understanding, especially the younger generations, of how my generation . . . how our work ethic is, how our commitment to our community is. (Participant 1)

Participants cited support from professional counsellors and professors to help them manage frustrations and tasks. Provision of these strategies aided them in the performance of the individual roles as well as managing their time in order to participate in these roles. The wish list items cited involved access to professional counselling, peer support team programs, and provision of resources to aid employees in participating in others roles. One participant suggested “Put a gym and day care in every office. You want women to come to work who had babies. You have to support your employees and that will help dads come to work too.” (Participant 3)

Focus / Orientation

For this category, eight (38%) participants identified 12 helping incidents. There were no hindering incidents or wish list items identified in this category. For this study, focus / orientation represents the participants’ deliberate restriction of focus to the performance of role
tasks required in the moment or in the near future. It includes the purposeful compartmentalization of and transition between roles.

For one participant, it was important for her to limit her focus to the tasks of the day, stating

It’s just taking it one day at a time and not letting things really overwhelm me…. just literally being in position to where you have to mentally say “make it to the end of the day and don’t make a stupid decision today”. (Participant 9)

Another participant restricted his focus even more, relaying

That actually even helps with my role, my job as bush trooper, managing the task at hand while keeping the main goal in mind. I do mainly as a trooper and that I think also applies to making everything work out in all the other circles. (Participant 10)

For another participant, her attention to the time oriented her to her role performance. She explained “I’m also very time oriented. If it’s ten after five I’m like ‘Okay. I’ve gotta go home and cook dinner, I gotta do this, I gotta do that at home’ and my focus shifts.” (Participant 18)

**Organizational Support**

For this category, eight (38%) participants identified 10 helping incidents. Five (24%) participants identified 6 hindering incidents. Six (29%) participants identified 9 wish list items in this category. For this study, organizational support refers to the presence or absence of practical and emotional support offered by supervisors, co-workers, and organizational policies and practices. Examples include the flexibility of work schedules, management styles, and availability of resources.
One participant told of how the police agency was supportive of him following a death in the family: “I would even say my organization is supportive. A good example is my grandmother passed away in my first year on the street in patrol duties and they credited me eleven shifts for family bereavement.” (Participant 16) The same participant also spoke of how the organization’s vacation policy hindered his ability to participate in a recreational sport:

Police officers and all emergency services personnel fall under a different part of the labor code and that allows the service to give us less vacation time as other employees and the standard in this province for any type of job, really a full-time job with benefits is two weeks of vacation per year. I wasn’t even able to go snowboarding. (Participant 16)

Another participant spoke of how verbal encouragement from her supervisors promoted her ability to maintain her other life roles: “My bosses trust me and they appreciate what I’m doing and I’m always getting positive feedback, so that encourages me to keep doing what I’m doing.” (Participant 18)

Participants suggested several changes the police organization could make to promote their ability to maintain and participate in their life roles. The suggestions ranged from provision of resources, policy and practice changes, to having more influence over their work roles.

One participant spoke of how he felt that the police organization could shift their management practices to be more supportive of police officers in participating in other life roles, stating

I think to have an organization that actually values mental health like they value physical health, and they don’t value physical health even that much, but I think if we brought in some kind of ethical, physical and psychological management into our
organization that would certainly help people like myself play more of a role in society.  

(Participant 3)

Another participant spoke of how she wished there were more support for female police officers who were trying to manage their career and motherhood, stating

I wish we had more resources for women. It would be nice just having conversations with other women earlier on in their career to, again just an awareness to how those different trajectories would be, providing the information and just having mentors might even just work. You get women who have kids and it’s infinitely harder to get promoted once you have kids. Your career trajectory is just different than the men’s. Nobody takes you aside and lets you know that if you do this as a female officer this makes it harder down the road. (Participant 17)

One participant spoke of how it would be helpful to have some input into work assignments once promoted

In the workplace in policing you don’t have a lot of say like where you’re gonna go next, especially when you become a sergeant you lose all rights to… they just put you wherever every two years. I think if you had more of a say, then your life is not so all up in the air all the time. (Participant 14)

Other Interests

For this category, seven (33%) participants identified 11 helping incidents. There were no hindering incidents or wish list items identified in this category. For this study, other interests signifies the participants’ enjoyment and interest in a variety of activities outside of the policing profession.
One participant explained how having various hobbies allowed him to maintain a broadened focus, stating

My hobbies... motorcycles, traveling, kind of anything to separate from the work and even if it’s just taking a five or ten minute drive up into the countryside where there’s really not a lot of people around just to look at the scenery and take it all in, really kind of allows me to get away from the stress of being a rural trooper and everything else and just really be able to focus on my life and not just my life in law enforcement.

(Participant 10)

Another participant echoed this notion that hobbies promoted his ability to maintain a broadened perspective regarding his life roles, reporting

When I’m out on the boat or fishing or flying into somewhere over you know 200 miles of forests and you know just that part of it really drives home that life’s too short or life’s too big or the world it’s too big to hang everything on one identifying role. (Participant 13)

Communications with Family, Friends, and Co-workers

For this category, seven (33%) participants identified 7 helping incidents. Three (14%) participants identified 4 hindering incidents. Four (19%) participants identified 7 wish list items in this category. For this study, communications with family, friends, and co-workers refers to ongoing dialogue with family members, friends and co-workers that either enhances or detracts from the participants’ quality of life. It includes the use of technology to facilitate these communications from a distance.

One participant spoke of how communications with his wife helped him, stating
We have a very open relationship communication-wise. That’s what we always spoke about was not to bottle things up and then that has helped both of us maintain who we want to be and who we are and what we want to do in life. We discussed having kids and that helped me move forward, because I wanted to progress in my career. (Participant 4)

Participants spoke of how their ability to maintain their friend roles was reduced due to the difficulty of communicating with friends they have left behind when they moved. One participant explained:

My relationship with them has obviously changed, because it’s no longer face to face … So you lose that and you know it’s not like immediately being driven and communicating by phone. You lose body language. So sometimes people may be telling you stuff but you don’t hear the whole message. (Participant 19)

The presence of communications from fellow officers was also cited as interfering with one participant’s role performance

I use vacation time for football to start. I take it off and I tell everybody, including my board, I will not be available on this date, this date, this date, this date, this date, this date – we’ve got football games and those kids are counting on me and the board’s good, because they realize it’s role modeling, but there’s other police officers (who say) “Well have you decided to be a cop or football coach?” (Participant 13)

One participant indicated that she wished there were some form of communications training to assist her in talking to her husband about her desire to participate in other roles that might not include him, stating
Your husband after seven years gets angry when you take yourself off on a mountain bike ride and you gotta learn how to talk to him about that. You wish that there was lessons you know when you get married about how to communicate with your spouse instead of you know having a million arguments and then walking out the door after ten years and then learning oh that’s how you communicate. (Participant 17)

Technology was considered both a hindering factor and a wish list item. One participant spoke of how communications with co-workers using technology hindered her ability to maintain participation in other life roles, stating

   The only thing obviously is with technology and it being 2014 and people just being so connected is that I do have a work Blackberry so that is something that kind of encroaches on my other personal time when I’m not here. I’m constantly returning text messages and dealing with people that want time off and trying to arrange people that are coverage when people are sick and trying to marry people up to do projects and stuff on my time off. (Participant 18)

Technology was also cited as a wish list item which would facilitate performing other life roles by enhancing communications with family who live afar. One participant stated “If I could get my dad to actually buy a computer . . . embrace technology I would feel that I can stay in touch with him more.” (Participant 2)

**Self-care**

For this category, five (24%) participants identified 7 helping incidents. There were no hindering incidents identified in this category. One (5%) participant identified 1 wish list item in this category. For this study, self-care involves activities participants perform in furtherance of
their physical, emotional, and spiritual health. For some of the participants, self-care entailed exercise to keep them healthy while others cited simply setting aside time for whatever they needed as being helpful.

One participant identified self-care as instrumental in helping him to return to a balanced, broad identity, stating

I’ve had to work hard in terms of prioritizing my health through sports because I was working so much and not finding myself able to eat or workout, so my fitness level decreased but I’ve tried to work hard on bringing that back. (Participant 16)

Another participant identified maintaining her mental health as helpful in maintaining a broad identity, stating “I would say number one thing obviously is maintain your mental health and you’ll be able to juggle all the other roles that are going on.” (Participant 14) One participant spoke of how she believed that her ability to maintain a broad identity would be enhanced by the provision of facilities and opportunities for self-care, stating

I think it’s important that you know for members get an opportunity to take a break and go to the gym for an hour and disengage and just do something healthy and that’s really tough to do when you’re in patrol. (Participant 11)

*Flexibility of Recreation / Volunteer Hours*

For this category, two (10%) participants identified 2 helping incidents. One (5%) participant identified 1 hindering incident. One (5%) participant identified 1 wish list item in this category. This last category fell short of the participation rate but is included here as it is distinct from the other categories. For this study, flexibility of recreation / volunteer hours refers
to the ability to participate in recreation or volunteer activities based upon the flexibility of the schedule.

Participants indicated that other organizations offering flexible participation hours facilitated their ability to partake in community and recreational activities as indicated by the following excerpt

In the roles in the community they pretty much allowed me to make my own kind of volunteer schedule with that right, so I’m able to work around my own schedule and schedule with the family and stuff like that, so I’m able to make that time so whenever I’m able to find that time I’m able to do it. (Participant 8)

Another participant lamented the difficulty participating in a role due to the rigid schedule, stating

Other organizations being inflexible too I feel. Especially with regards to volunteer organizations that they’re based around a typical work schedule, Monday through Friday 7:00 to 5:00 and so they’ll always hold a meeting consistently on a date and a lot of the members of volunteer organizations will have an expectation of course that you follow that organizations schedule. (Participant 16)

Hindering Categories

There were 8 hindering categories with 5 of these categories meeting the suggested 25% participation rate. A discussion of each of these categories follows.
**Work Hours**

For this category, 14 (67%) participants identified 24 hindering incidents. Five (24%) participants identified 7 helping incidents. Seven (33%) participants identified 9 wish list items in this category. For this study, work hours includes the participants’ hourly and weekly schedule to include rotating schedule, overtime, mandatory attendance at work-related events including court, training, and call-outs. By far, this category contained the most hindering incidents. Participants spoke of how their work hours interfered with their ability to participate in team sports, maintain contact with others who did not work shift work, see their family members and attend family functions. One participant spoke of how working through weekends and being off work during the week interfered with his ability to see his children

I’m working all weekend, so I don’t see them because when I come on days off they’re in school. I’m working weekends and they’re all off and like on days off I’m here by myself most of the week right, so again more time and more hours in the day would help benefit that so. (Participant 8)

Another participant also indicated the difficulty with his schedule, stating “I have a really hard time having a schedule. It doesn’t really allow you to do things, team sports and things like that if you’re on a regular schedule you can participate in.” (Participant 18)

Participants who found their work hours helpful indicated that they were working positions with fixed hours that allowed them to have time off that coincided with social activities and family time. One participant stated “Having a regular schedule like regular people helps me do what I need to do in my other roles, especially helping my son with his school work.” (Participant 2)
Participants who indicated work hours as a wish list item referred to the desire to have different hours that would allow them to perform other life roles. Participant 8 responded “I would have probably have all the time in the world to do everything else… all those other roles that were discussed, because they all take place during the evenings for the coaching and volunteer stuff.”

**Role Conflict**

For this category, seven (33%) participants identified 12 hindering incidents. Two (10%) participants identified 4 helping incidents. Two (10%) participants identified 2 wish list items in this category. For this study, role conflict refers to the conflict of interest involved in certain roles as well as the psychological spillover of one role into the performance of another role. Examples include a supervisory relationship interfering with participants’ ability to perform friend roles and difficulty restricting the police role to the work setting. It also includes the conflicting perceptions of participants’ life roles by others. An example of this might be persons identifying participants primarily by their police role when participants are enacting another role such as parent or team member.

One participant spoke of how he and his friends in policing demarcate their police roles from their non-police roles, stating “Even in the small number of police officers that I do hang out with when we’re not at work, we don’t discuss work.” (Participant 5) Another participant spoke of how others’ perceptions of his multiple, conflicting identity roles reaffirmed his desire to maintain them, stating

I said that was the most flattering compliment I’ve ever had when he said you’re like an onion, for me that was so moving, it reaffirmed me, because those other offers seemed
like I fit a couple of check boxes that would match their demographic profiling so they could market me as ‘oh look what we are doing’. So that helped reaffirm my identity, because there’s been a lot of pressure at different points to just conform. (Participant 13)

Role conflict was a much larger hindrance for the participants for a variety of reasons. Transitioning from work to home was difficult for many of the participants. They indicated that it was hard to turn off their police role and it was difficult because they felt they could not talk to their family about what they were thinking about from work. Other role conflict concerns involved how participants’ roles as supervisors made it hard to maintain friendships with their subordinates. One participant said “Since I became sergeant I don’t really go out with the unit. Five years ago I was on the road with these guys and we were buddies, so it was really hard to adjust to becoming their boss” (Participant 14)

An additional hindering factor was other’s primary identification of the participant as a police officer despite the participant’s participation in a non-police activity. One participant relayed

Everybody I know labels me as a police officer primarily and I feel like that impacts all of my other roles as well and how I perform. For example, I used to be part of a rugby team where the guys would have beer on the field after practice or after a game and of course that’s not something I can participate in and they would just joke around on the field with me about “Oh you can’t do this” and “Are you gonna show up and give us tickets?”. (Participant 16)

Two participants spoke of what they wished for which would help them to maintain a broad identity. One participant stated
I think it’s people’s perceptions. When people find out what you do or the professional role that you play, I think they view you as something different than what you are. I think it slows it (their understanding) until they get to know me. (Participant 5)

The other participant echoed his sentiment, stating

I don’t know if this would ever change, but maybe if being a police officer wasn’t always the main label or the main identity that other people would give members of a police service. If other people weren’t constantly asking about my job or the cases I had or what I was doing or identifying me as a police officer when I’m participating in other events or other identities … if other people weren’t putting that label onto me then I feel like that would also help. (Participant 16)

**Police Culture**

For this category, seven (33%) participants identified 11 hindering incidents. One (5%) participant identified 1 helping incident. Five (24%) participants identified 5 wish list items in this category. For this study, police culture refers to the attitude of police officers toward non-police persons and situations stemming from working in a professional culture that promotes an “us and them” mentality. It includes the spillover of this police mentality to non-police settings. The singular helping incident identified in police culture was one participant’s identification of her police husband’s understanding of the police culture and police work that enhanced her ability to maintain both her police and partner roles, stating

My husband now is very supportive of everything and I find that I am actually doing better at work now that I’m allowed to and I feel like I’m allowed to want to do better
and I don’t have to worry about I’m stuck on overtime. He gets it. He might not like it that I’m not home you know, but he gets it. (Participant 14)

One participant spoke of how the “us and them” mentality in the police culture has historically hindered his ability to have friendships outside of work

The one thing that I always thought is how can I be friends with people that don’t know the job I do or being in a job that I am doing and we always see the dirt bags and the less than desirables and all these people and it’s always been that thought in my mind like “How can I just be friends with just regular Joe blows?” But now that I do these other roles I see that not everybody is like the people that we deal with, not everybody is a dirt bag. I can’t just paint that brush on everybody. (Participant 8)

The police culture which promotes conformity and unwavering dedication to the job was also cited as a hindering factor:

The pressure to be a cop… and there’s so much pressure to conform. We were at another funeral for another officer after his dad died. He says there were times when I think you were closer to my dad than I ever was. He was always at work and I just… you know it struck a chord that it’s wrong so… not wrong, just different generation, (a) different mindset. But that pressure is still there that you’re obligation should be to the job, to the job, to the job. (Participant 13)

Another officer identified a shift in police culture as a wish list, suggesting

So the only thing I could see really helping that would be the development of police services to embrace or inspire officers to have multiple roles and embrace and even draw upon the experiences that those different roles bring to you. It’s a cultural shift that it
would have to be such a complete retooling of policing that I won’t see it in my career.

(Participant 13)

**Role Overload**

For this category, seven (33%) participants identified 10 hindering incidents. One (5%) participant identified a helping item. Five (24%) participants identified 5 wish list items in this category. For this study, role overload refers to the limited amount of time to perform all of the roles. Participants spoke of their difficulties managing all of their demands, requiring them to scale back their role participation. One participant responded “It’s hard to fit a 28 hour day into 24 hours. I sometimes overextend myself and that’s why I’m starting to cut back on some things, because now I have to really look at priorities.” (Participant 1) Another participant echoed this sentiment, stating

There’s only so much one person can do and having to prioritize is how those things wound up getting pushed away at the time. Half the time when you’re at work you think about things you should be doing at home or for your child or when you’re with your child you think about things you should have been doing at work or at home.

(Participant 9)

For those who identified wish list items, they indicated a desire to have more help at work to reduce the amount of work they have to do. They also indicated a desire to lessen the number of roles they have. One participant stated he wished to “. . . lessen my roles that I have right now. Try not to stretch myself thin, but give myself a few roles so at least I can focus on all of them a lot more and in a lot more detail.” (Participant 8)
Operational Stress

For this category, six (29%) participants identified 8 hindering incidents. There were no helping or wish list items identified in this category. For this study, operational stress refers to the emotional and physical impact of performing the operational police role. Examples include being exposed to stressful calls for service while assigned to the patrol division.

One participant spoke of how the stress of the work interferes with his ability to participate in others roles, stating “The stressors that you have to deal with work that you try not to take home. You try to leave work at work, which is sometimes obviously difficult. I think it just hinders who you truly are.” (Participant 4) Another participant spoke of how operational stress interfered with his other life roles:

We’ve lost that day and that evening because we’re dealing with my issues at work. It would be hard just to enjoy things. I wouldn’t be able to necessarily have such a more pleasant evening with my wife, because I’d just be still stressed out and upset from what happened during that day. (Participant 10)

Other participants spoke of how physically draining it was to work in an operational capacity, which affected their energy levels to participate in other roles. One participant responded “It’s even emotionally draining because you’ve got a family at home that you need to deal with and you’ve been working for fourteen hours and then you don’t give them the time that they need.” (Participant 4) Another participant spoke of how a former time of imbalance where he worked too much created a host of health problems that hindered his ability to maintain other life roles, stating “I would say constantly working at 110% attention on the job had totally drained me for off the job.” (Participant 16)
**Disruptive Events**

For this category, five (24%) participants identified 6 hindering incidents. There were no helping incidents or wish list items identified in this category. This category also fell slightly shy of the suggested 25% participation rate. For this study, disruptive events refers to irregular or periodic demands or events that influence the participant’s time. Participants listed a variety of disruptive events that interfered with their ability to maintain participation in other life roles. These events included unexpected weather, injuries, accidents, and unexpected demands at work. One participant offered an example of a kind of accident that interfered with her performance of daily life roles, relaying “Life gets in the way every so often. I am definitely a good wife and I’m definitely not cooking on days where I’ve managed to set things on fire.” (Participant 17)

**Health**

For this category, four (19%) participants identified 4 hindering incidents. Three (14%) participants identified 3 helping incidents. There were no wish list items identified in this category. This category did not meet the suggested participation rate but is included here due to the distinctive nature of the category. For this study, health refers to the participants’ quality of health. Examples include levels of energy and presence or absence of disease. One participant spoke of how having good health helped her maintain a broad identity, stating

I am very blessed to not have any health issues. Health is everything. Without it you have nothing. Having my health and having my family healthy is the most important thing to me. My broad identity is enhanced when my health is present as I can function in my daily life, experiencing and living it to the fullest. (Participant 12)
Another participant echoed her sentiment, stating “I think a level of fitness keeps me motivated to eat well, which keeps my energy up, which helps me work harder both at home and work.” (Participant 18)

The absence of health was a hindrance for some participants. One participant spoke of how her participation in activities has been hindered due to a health problem, stating “I did develop chronic kidney disease. I have lost a kidney, so it certainly impacts how I engage in my athletic endeavors.” (Participant 17) Another participant spoke of how age-related changes hindered her energy levels for maintaining a broad identity, stating

I think certainly as you get older in policing what your body can take getting through menopause, all those things that you go through just naturally that your energy level is different. I think that your personal health has affected how much energy I have for my roles. (Participant 2)

**Partner’s Hours / Work and Personal Demands**

For this category, three (14%) participants identified 4 hindering incidents. Two (10%) participants identified 2 helping incidents. There were no wish list items identified in this category. The participation rate for this category did not meet the suggested 25% but is included due to the distinctive nature of the incidents. For this study, partner’s hours / work & personal demands refers to the impact of intimate partners’ work hours and life role demands on the performance of participants’ life roles.

In some instances, participants’ partners’ hours facilitated participants’ ability to perform other roles. One participant relayed
It’s wonderful, because my husband is also a shift worker. When he is away I can read my book and not that I can’t when he’s home, but you want to do things together, so you like your little time alone. (Participant 12)

In other instances, participants’ partners’ hours or work demands interfered with participants’ abilities to maintain participation in other life roles. One participant, whose partner is also a police officer, relayed how his work demands interfered with their family time, stating

My husband’s crazy work schedule and multiple cell phones and responsibilities does at times hinder mine. We cannot have a family dinner or a conversation or go anywhere without him being on his phone or doing something to work. (Participant 18)

**Helping and Hindering Category**

There was one category that was comprised equally of helping and hindering items. This category is discussed next.

**Financial Situation**

For this category, there was an equal percentage of participation in helping and hindering incidents as well as an equal number of incidents cited. Four (19%) participants identified 4 helping and 4 hindering incidents in this category. Two (10%) participants also identified 2 wish list items in this category. For this study, financial situation refers to the presence or absence of financial resources that impacts participants’ ability to perform life roles. The presence of financial resources allows participants to either have more free time from work to participate in other activities or affords them the means to participate in activities that cost money. The absence of financial resources requires participants to either work in lieu of non-work activities or otherwise limits their participation in activities due to the cost involved.
For many of the participants, their financial freedom allowed them to limit the amount of time at work, whether it be a job share program or declining overtime. For others, their financial limitations prohibited their participation in certain activities. One participant stated “It just is expensive, so the other things that I did both prior to having a child I was able to enjoy things. I could afford to do it at the time, can’t afford to do it anymore.” (Participant 9)

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter focused on the results of the contextual and critical incident data, including the categorization of the helpful, hindering, and wish list items according to my interpretation of the data set. In the chapter that follows, I will discuss how these results relate to existing literature. This discussion is followed by a summary of the limitations of the study. Finally, I will discuss implications for future research and how the results of this study might apply practically to the counselling setting and to police organizational policy and practices.
Chapter 5: Discussion

This study was undertaken in hopes of learning how some police officers are able to enjoy a range of occupational, social and personal roles, given the documented tendency for police officers to narrow their identity construction (Gilmartin, 2002; Paton, et al., 2009, Violanti, 1997). Thus far, research has focused on the negative effects of narrowing identities without much attention to how some officers manage to maintain a broad identity. Investigating the exceptions to the rule, police officers who are doing well in managing multiple identity roles, offers insights as to how it is accomplished. Using the ECIT methodology illuminates not only what helps and hinders, but also generates a discussion of what would be helpful to police officers in managing their broad identities. This methodology enriches the picture given in other quantitative studies of work-life conflict with the inclusion of the voices of those police officers’ who are managing to balance this conflict. I will begin the discussion of the results, beginning with the contextual data.

Contextual Data

Consistent with previous research, participants endorsed being very busy at work but reported loving their work (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012). Approximately half (52%) of participants had recently transferred to their position, which I find interesting because it would seem that the new position might create imbalance in their roles because they are learning role performance behaviours in the new roles. Only a small percentage (27%) indicated a need to augment their skills for the new role. Approximately a quarter (24%) of the participants were administrative supervisors, which may explain why some have fixed schedules, which was later identified as a helping factor in the Work Hours category. Their identification of playing many roles within the workplace was well-supported with the identification of 45 police-work related
roles. This finding might also have been a preview for their subsequent discussion of role overload and role conflict.

Participants reported a shift in their focus from the police role to non-police roles, which may be attributable to a variety of the factors identified in the critical incident portion of the interview; namely their work perspective, prioritization and organization of their roles, and their values may have changed due to regrettable experiences or, to a lesser degree, due to changes in their health. It would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study of police officers as they navigate their careers, managing some of the milestone events of early adulthood such as entering into marriage and parenthood. Retrospective accounts offered in the contextual portion of this study hint at how participants believed they changed across their career span from being work-focused to being family-focused.

Critical Incidents and Wish List Items

The 23 critical incident categories are distinct in their composition but, at times, appear to interplay in their influence on participants’ abilities to maintain broad identities. Due to the distinctive nature of the categories, which was confirmed by the second interview with participants (7th credibility check) and police expert raters (8th credibility check), there were no categories with a 100% participation rate. Many of the wish list items stemmed from difficulties cited as hindering items but occasionally came from helping incidents that could be more helpful. I will discuss my interpretation of each of the critical incident categories as they relate to existing identity, career, and policing literature, beginning with the helping categories.
Helping Categories

Participant responses resulted in a dominance of helping categories. Fourteen helping categories emerged, 12 of which met the suggested participation rate. Helping incidents comprised 55.25% of all of the incidents reported (221 of 400). Interestingly, three of the helping categories, Values and Personal Standards / Parental Influence, Responsibility to Others, and Organizational Support, contained a significant number of hindering incidents as well. I will discuss each helping category in descending order of participation rates.

Values and Personal Standards for Living / Parental Influence

This category provides new information into the influence of police officer’s values, personal standards, and proactive approaches to managing their identity roles. Previous research relating to police officers’ values has focused on cultural conformity or has been theoretical (Gilmartin, 2002; Harris, 1973; Kirschman, 1997; Paton et al., 2009). For instance, the concept of false personalization has been used to explain how police officers perform behaviours that are inconsistent with their individual values to conform to group behavioural norms (Harris, 1973). More recently, the notion of self-categorization (Hogg, 1992; Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994), where individuals define themselves according to group norms, might also explain police officers’ tendency to conform to the values of the police culture. It would appear that the participants who endorsed their values as helping them maintain a broad identity are not succumbing to the process of false personalization or self-categorization.

Participants’ identification of their values and standards might also be explained by the concept of personal identity. According to Hewitt (1997), personal identity is
a sense of self built up over time as the person embarks on and pursues projects or goals that are not thought of as those of a community, but as the property of the person. Personal identity thus emphasizes a sense of individual autonomy rather than of communal involvement (p. 93).

Hitlin (2003) contends that the personal identity is unique to the individual and is produced through commitments to values. Hitlin articulates that these values, in turn, contribute to value-identities and consequently value behaviours. On the other hand, Gecas’ (2000) suggests that value-identities relate to the individual’s self-concept which are determined by the values held by individuals. For instance, an individual’s view of the self as a “good person” would contribute to behaviours consistent with this view mediating the value. Participants reported values such as loyalty, positivity, and a strong work ethic. As the participants described their values, personal standards and dispositions, these factors seemed to underpin their choices to participate in roles as well as how well they performed within the roles. There seemed to be an intentionality in conducting their lives according to these values. The notion of life by design versus life by default might also apply to these participants’ way of maintaining their life roles (Digliani, 2014). Life by design proposes intentional life choices and behaviours based upon underlying identified values. Participants are making purposeful choices about their participation in various roles. For instance, some participants spoke of getting an education, participating in the student role, to create options for their future.

Taking a proactive approach to maintaining a broad identity can also be understood by considering the concept of possible selves (see page 35 of this document) as participants spoke of enacting roles in furtherance of future goals (Markus & Nurius, 1986). These goals likely relate to the participants’ identification of personal values and standards for living and might also relate
to some of the regrettable incidents that participants reported. The impact of regrettable experiences is discussed in the next category.

**Regrettable Experience**

There is a burgeoning body of research relating to the positive effects of traumatic events (Chopko, 2010; Shakespeare-Finch, Smith, Gow, Embleton, & Baird, 2003; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996, Tedeschi, Park, & Calhoun, 1998). Chopko (2010) found a correlation between police officers’ experiences of traumatic distress and post-traumatic growth as measured by the Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996) and Impact of Events Scale-Revised (Weiss & Marmar, 1997). Shakespeare-Finch, et al. (2003) found in their study of ambulance personnel’s response to traumatic events that 98.6% reported at least one positive change following a work-related traumatic event. Over half of the seasoned ambulance officers reported moderate levels of post-traumatic growth while almost a quarter reported a “great” or “very great” level of growth following a traumatic event. The five factors suggested in post-traumatic growth relate to: 1) changes in relation to others, 2) perception of new possibilities, 3) changes in the individual’s sense of personal strength, 4) spiritual and religious changes, and 5) a new appreciation for life (Siegal & Schrimshaw, 2000; Tedeschi, Park, & Calhoun, 1998). The concept of post-traumatic growth has been questioned by others regarding the reliability of reports of growth by trauma survivors (Maercker & Zoellner, 2004; Wilson & Ross, 2001). However, Tedeschi and Calhoun have responded to these criticisms, citing the use of the Marlow-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (1960) as bolstering the validity of the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996) and noting that posttraumatic growth is oftentimes corroborated by others (Park, Cohen, & Murch, 1996). Consistent with these factors, participants in this study endorsed positive changes in relation to significant others and a new
appreciation for life, which helped them to embrace more of their life roles. Some of the participants spoke of traumatic events such as the death or suicidal death of a co-worker while other events were less discrete such as the deterioration of the participant’s mental health or relationships.

In addition to the research studies supporting this category, there are several identity theories that might explain some of the participants’ identity shifts following a regrettable experience such as Burke’s (1991a) Identity Control Theory (ICT), Markus and Nurius’ (1986) possible selves (see page 35 of this document) and Ibarra’s (1999) provisional selves (see page 35 of this document). Participants described receiving feedback from others that they had changed or personally noticing the changes in their own health or behaviour. According to Burkes’ (1991a) ICT, receiving this input creates distress due to the discrepancy between the individual’s existing identity standards and the incoming information, stimulating a change in behaviour. This process can be extended, courtesy of Social Learning Theory, to include alterations of behaviour based upon noting this discrepancy in another person’s identity standards and environmental input (Bandura, 1977). On a larger scale, a regrettable experience might lead to an identity interruption (Burke, 1991a). An identity interruption occurs when 1) an event is chronic or severe, 2) the identity is one that the individual is committed to, 3) the identity input comes from a significant source (person), and 4) the interrupted identity is highly salient (Burke, 1991a). Participants’ identification of the death of a co-worker as impacting their police identity role would likely meet all four criteria of an identity interruption.

Additionally, the notion of possible selves might also explain how participants were influenced by observing the regrettable experiences of others or earlier regrettable experiences of their own (Markus & Nurius, 1986). According to Markus and Nurius, this awareness could
guide an individual’s behaviour, meaning-making processes, and self-assessment. Furthermore, those who learned how other officers overcame their difficulties with role conflicts may see these individuals as role models for desirable possible selves. Those who reported shifting their behaviours following their own regrettable experience early in their career may have been enacting their *provisional selves* early in their career, which required adjustments due to negative feedback (Ibarra, 1999).

**Family Support**

Identification of family support as being helpful was not surprising, given that 90% of the participants reported that their family roles such as parent, partner, and child roles were their most important identity roles. Family support has been documented to be a strong beneficial factor for police officers in managing the demands of policing (Conn & Butterfield, 2013). Consistent with the studies of work-life conflict in Canadian police, the control and flexibility of the home environment may facilitate the participants’ participation in their work role, as well as other life roles (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012). Participants identified both practical and emotional support from family as bolstering their maintenance of broad identities. There did not appear to be a slant in favour of males relying on the support of their female partners in that five of the seven female participants (71%) identified items in this category while nine of the fourteen male (64%) participants identified items in this category. This may have been due to the fact that some of the participants were also married to police officers.

**Responsibility to Others**

Prior research on police officers has demonstrated that police officers’ responsibility as caretakers for their children and parents has contributed to their work-life conflict (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012). However, responsibility to others was deemed a helping category in this study.
due to the dominance of helping over hindering incidents. Therefore, this finding provides new insights into how having a sense of responsibility to others promotes work-life balance, not just work-life conflict. It is possible that the responsibility to others is supported by research that suggests that the importance of the role to the participant’s self-concept and the harmony of their roles contributes to well-being by moderating the stress experienced in performing the role (Brook, Garcia & Fleming, 2008).

Theoretically, this category can be explained by Identity Theory’s notion of identity salience (Stryker, Serpe, & Hunt, 2005). The salience of identity roles is contingent on levels of both interactional and affective commitment (Stryker, Serpe & Hunt, 2005). In the personal realm, affective commitment, which relies on individuals’ emotional investment in relationships, likely explains the participants’ commitment to performing personal roles such as parent, partner and friend. Interactional commitment, which entails the extensiveness of the interactions in a social network, might also explain some of the participants’ sense of responsibility to their family, network of friends, and sporting teams. Similarly, in the professional role, participants were embedded in a social network of coworkers, possibly furthering their levels of interactional commitment. In policing, there is also a documented emotional “brotherhood” which would heighten participants’ affective commitment (Gilmartin, 2002; Violanti, 1997). Research has found that family and coworkers are deemed more influential on levels of commitment than more distal social structures and might explain why some participants identified their parental roles as more important than their work roles (Stryker, Serpe, & Hunt, 2005).

**Work Perspective**

Participants’ identification of their work perspective as impacting their work-life balance may be bolstered by a body of research which documents changes in the employee-employer
relationship. Employees’ work perspectives have been researched in terms of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995) and generational differences (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001; Galt, 2000; Loughlin & Barling, 2001; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). Additionally, theoretical models such as role identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) offer explanations as to the possible underlying processes involved in work role salience.

Workers’ perspectives about their work are believed to be related to their perceived organizational support (POS), (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986), potentially correlating the work perspective category with the organizational support category. Much of the research on employee-organization relationships reflects that employees’ commitment to work is lessened due to a perceived breach of the psychological contract between the organization and the employee (Johnson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2003). According to Rousseau (1995) a psychological contract is “individual beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organization” (p. 9). Johnson and O’Leary-Kelly (2003) found that those who perceived a breach of the psychological contract were more likely to be absent from work and would have a reduced quality of in-role performance. There were some hindering factors in the organizational category, which might explain a portion of the participants’ work perspectives as consistent with existing research and theory. However, a majority of the participants in this category cited the presence of organizational support, rendering this category as helping, not hindering. Therefore, the fact that participants who enjoy their work, to include appreciating organizational support, identify their work perspective as allowing them to have more balance is new information.

Generational differences in employees’ relationships to their work have been supported by research (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001; Galt, 2000; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000).
Research on Generation X workers has documented a diminished sense of loyalty to their work as compared to older workers (Loughlin & Barling, 2001). Their reduced loyalty also reflects a better work-life balance (Eisner, 2005; Loughlin & Barling, 2001). Many of the participants in this study would fall into the Generation X category with a few participants straddling the Generation X and the Baby Boomers categories. Therefore, participants’ work perspectives may be partially supported by the research on generational differences in the workplace.

Theoretically, participants’ description of their perspective toward their work is aligned with the concept of deriving their identity from who one is (social identity theory) versus what one does (identity theory) (Thoits & Virshup, 1997). Several participants reported that policing is what they did, not who they were. For some participants, this perspective changed over time in their career. Some of the participants indicated that they were single and did not have children when they began policing. As they acquired partner roles and parental roles, it appears that their work perspective shifted. One participant even stated that she felt it was a “natural progression” to pull back from work. Participants’ responsibility to others also likely influenced the shift. As discussed previously, regrettable experiences may have also contributed to a shift in their perspective about their work.

Additionally, role identification, where individuals define themselves at least partly by their role, might explain the participants’ work perspective (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Strong role identification, where the role is highly valued, hinders transitions into less valued roles. Some participants reported placing high values on non-police roles such as parenting and partnership roles, which might explain their ready transition out of the police role into these roles. Different results might be obtained if the average age and years of service was much less than the sample in this study.
Non-police Support

Participants indicated that spending time with non-police others helped to remind them of their non-police identities. I also found this previously in a study of police officers’ coping with secondary traumatic stress (Conn & Butterfield, 2013). They also indicated that their social roles with non-police others were facilitated by the others’ tolerance of their variable schedules. Maintaining contact with non-police support persons was believed to be the antidote for the “us and them” mentality that is pervasive in policing for these participants. The literature relating to police officers’ non-police relationships has consisted of hypothetical models relating to their social isolation from non-police others and the deleterious effects of this isolation (Van Maanen, 1978; Violanti, 1997). It is implied from these models that the presence of non-police others would be helpful to reduce the tendency of narrowing worldviews and problem-solving skills. However, this has not yet been researched, suggesting that the participants’ identification of the helpfulness of non-police support is emerging information which merits further investigation.

The beneficial impact of maintaining non-police support persons may be explained by theoretical models relating to identity. According to Burke (2006), interacting with “others” may be avoided to avoid the influence of others who might disconfirm the prized identity. Since only 10% of these participants identified the police role as their most important identity, it is understandable that the participants would identify non-police support as helpful. These non-police support persons do not threaten the participants’ most important identity. Many of the participants maintained these supports from before entering policing. It is unclear if maintaining these relationships was a contributor or a product of maintaining balance, or both. Whatever the reason, it appears to be important to maintain non-police support.
Specifically to police identities, Violanti (1997) proposes a psychological model of police suicide that identifies the diminished use of multiple social roles, which includes non-police others, as contributing to cognitive constriction. This cognitive constriction is believed to heighten police officers’ risk for suicide. Violanti contends that the risk is heightened because they are less likely to consider alternative courses of action compounded by their diminished social supports. Consistent with Violanti’s model, participants spoke of how non-police supports prevented them or at least mitigated the narrowing of their perspectives.

**Prioritization / Organization**

This category does not appear to have been examined in the police population prior to this study. Carlson and Kacmar (2000) investigated how centrality, importance and prioritization of life roles impacted work-life conflict in government employees but did not find prioritization to be a significant moderating factor. They proposed that even though individuals might deem a role as central and important, they may still be ambivalent with regard to how to prioritize multiple roles. They contend this ambivalence might be exacerbated by the fluctuation of importance of roles over time. Therefore, the identification of prioritization and organization as helping participants to maintain a broad identity warrants additional investigation, as it is a new finding.

Participants’ choices of how to prioritize and organize their life roles may be explained by Role-Identity Theory (RIT), where individuals negotiate competing roles, recognizing their interconnectedness (McCall & Simmons, 1966). Furthermore, participants’ prioritization of role enactments likely reflect their values, which was the most often cited helping factor. Since 90% of the participants identified some form of family role as most important, it was not surprising to see that many participants seemed to prioritize performance of these roles.
Psycho-education Regarding Policing / Professional Support

Research on psycho-education regarding policing could not be found. Some researchers have cited the extensive use of psycho-education because it seems like it would be helpful but contend that it is lacking evidentiary support (Wessely, Bryant, Greenberg, Earnshaw, Sharpley & Hacker Hughes, 2010). There is a large body of literature that discusses providing psycho-education regarding traumatic reactions following a police critical incident such as critical incident stress debriefings (CISD) (Everly & Boyle, 1999; Mitchell, 1983) or psychological first aid (National Child Traumatic Stress Network and National Center for PTSD, 2005). The effects of CISD are mixed, showing to have negative, positive and neutral outcomes (Bisson, 2003; Mayou, Ehlers, & Hobbs, 2000; McNally, Bryant, & Ehlers, 2003) while research on the ongoing benefits of psychological first aid is lacking (Ruzek, Brymer, Jacobs, Layne, Vernberg, & Watson, 2007). As such, there is a gap in the literature regarding how the provision of information about the demands of policing such as stress responses, shift work, and management of work-life balance facilitates police officers’ maintenance of balance across roles as well as their performance within the roles. This study suggests that this information is helpful, indicating a need for additional research.

In this study, psycho-education regarding policing was related to various topics such as stress management and maintaining work-life balance. Participants reported feeling that this information was helpful for them to take deliberate steps to maintain balance. Some of the education was provided by the police organization while others learned it in university criminal justice courses. One of the participants identified the need for psycho-education relating to the generational differences in work ethic in policing. This suggestion is also consistent with prior
research where older first responders, including police, identified rifts between younger and older workers as contributing to their desire to retire from their work roles (Conn, et al., 2015).

Research has also documented the reluctance of police to seek professional support such as counselling (Lanterman, Boyle, Pascarella & Furrer, 2010) but has not explored how some police officers are utilizing these supports to enhance their work-life balance. Participants identified various forms of professional support that bolstered their ability to maintain their life roles. The professionals identified were counsellors, university professors and child care workers. As in other categories, this support helped them to manage the role system by developing strategies for managing their time and also enhanced their performance within their roles. Experiencing success in performing these roles reinforced their participation in the roles. This process can be explained using the Burke’s (1991a) Identity Control Theory, where participants’ identities are being affirmed and reaffirmed in contact with positive feedback of their role performance.

The practical support afforded by guidance from university professors for participants with student roles and child care workers for participants with parent roles might be understood in terms of how these supports reduced role overload by decreasing the amount of time needed to perform certain roles. Another participant, who is male, stated a desire for additional professional support such as childcare so that female police officers could better manage their work-life balance as he had observed some of the difficulties his female peers have had. Role overload due to child care responsibilities has been documented elsewhere (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012).
Focus / Orientation

This category presents information not yet found in empirical studies. There are various models proposed to explain how individuals’ focus would impact their identity role performance or transitions. An example of a model, Boundary Theory (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000), might be applied to the participants’ identification of their deliberate focus on their tasks and location to discern the appropriate role performance, or the lack thereof. For those who identified focus / orientation as a helping factor, it would seem that the participants were segmenting their roles to draw a boundary between various roles. It is interesting to note that there were no identified hindering factors in this category. It may have been that the absence of deliberate focus may have been represented in the Role Conflict category, where the psychological spillover between conflicting roles is discussed. Critical incidents in the Focus / Orientation category are very similar in that the deliberate focus on the current role and task wards off the psychological spillover aspect of the Role Conflict category. These two categories are distinct in that Role Conflict reflects the incompatible nature of certain roles or role tasks such as parenting a child with the police role which a police officer would enact when interacting with a suspect while Focus / Orientation simply reflects a deliberate compartmentalization and transition between role performances which may or may not be incompatible. Hindering incidents cited in both categories could be explained by Boundary Theory’s notion of role confusion (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). Role confusion is lessened when roles are clearly segmented, which might explain how focus helps some participants to maintain a broad identity. It does, however, call for additional effort to switch focus from one domain to another, which was reflected in one participant’s identification of using the clock to orient herself to where she was supposed to be at the time. Another participant spoke of his transition, stating
I need an hour when I get out of work just to unwind and that’s like with me. So come say 5:00 o’clock, I have to trade position in, now I’m dad, now I’m a husband. All right I’m at home now.” (Participant 1)

According to Boundary Theory, the external cue, the clock, signalled to the participant to engage in certain activities, referred to as rites of separation, to facilitate the exit from the work role (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). This stage is followed by the movement stage, which involves rites of transition. The rites of transition produce physical and psychological movement toward the anticipated role, in this case the father role. Cognitive shifts must accompany this stage or psychological spillover occurs. Perhaps the psychological spillover was also captured in the Communications with Family, Friends, and Co-Workers category where participants’ role boundaries were blurred due to the use of technology to communicate about work outside of the work location.

**Organizational Support**

Prior research has indicated that organizational support impacts police officers’ work-life conflict and identities (Duxbury, 2007; Duxbury & Higgins, 2012; Van Maanen, 2010). As discussed in the helping category, Work Perspective, it is also supported by the literature on psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1995), and perceived organizational support (POS) (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986; Johnson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2003). Organizational support has largely been investigated relating to the absence of support and the consequences of this absence (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012; Johnson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2003), especially in studies of police organizations. Jones, Flynn and Kelloway (1995) found a positive correlation between perceived organizational support and low role conflict and role ambiguity.
Participants spoke of receiving support from their supervisors and co-workers as helpful in performing their work role as well as maintaining other life roles.

Organizational support is distinct but related to the hindering category, Work Hours. While work hours might be a less avoidable hindrance to work-life balance, organizational support, or lack thereof, seems to be more amenable to change. In fact, this category has the highest number of wish list items, closely followed by Work Hours. Critical incident items included in the Organizational Support category took many forms. Participants cited having a flexible work schedule, supportive supervisors, and the availability of resources as contributing to their ability to participate in various roles. Their identification of supportive management is consistent with other research that suggests that police officers’ identities are shaped by police managers (Van Maanen, 2010). Supportive managers are also identified as aiding officers to cope with the stress of work-life conflict (Duxbury, 2007; Duxbury & Higgins, 2012). Enjoying flexibility in their work schedule and the availability of resources were not surprising findings, given these factors had been identified as key moderators in mitigating work-life conflict (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012).

One of the wish list items was the provision of additional resources for female police officers to aid them in understanding how their career trajectory may be different than their male counterparts. This item may be understood in consideration of some of the literature on women in policing. According to Chan, Doran, and Marel (2010), female police officers may be doing policing, where their gender differences were downplayed to appear equal to their male police peers. Once established in the role of police officer, female police officers are able to be doing gender where they focus on family life. They are still not undoing gender if they continue to view the differences between them and male police officers as making them unequal, specifically
inferior, because they are not conforming to a male standard. This may explain why some female police officers feel that have to choose work over family, creating role conflict, in order to be promoted. Furthermore, embracing gender-stereotyped skills in policing, gender strategies, such as females’ people skills versus males’ physical dominance skills might also restrict role acquisitions and behaviours (Miller, 2002). An example of this would be a female police officer’s limited opportunities to work in a tactical unit. Participants did not speak specifically of this facet of their experience as women in policing but that is likely due to the nature of the research question. Organizational support might be offered by bringing these cultural variables to the forefront and taking measures to eliminate the perpetuation of a male standard for policing.

**Other Interests**

It seems like a logical conclusion that having interests outside of work would lead to the performance of roles related to these interests. Research on police officers having other interests tends to indicate the negative impact of not having any (Deschamps, Paganon-Badinier, Marchand, & Merle, 2003; Stearns & Moore, 1993). For instance research indicates that the absence of hobbies is correlated with higher stress levels (Deschamps, et al., 2003). Research also shows police officers report higher levels of burnout when they perceived that their work interfered with their hobbies (Stearns & Moore, 1993). The positive identification of the presence of other interests as a helping incident adds to the current body of literature.

If this study was repeated with police officers who did not self-identify as having a broad identity, I believe this category would still exist but the incidents would be hindering, not helping. Officers who identified as not having a broad identity might also cite having or developing other interests as wish list items. In a study I conducted on non-retiring older first
responders, participants spoke of the absence or loss of other interests as they progressed in their careers (Conn, et al., 2015). Some participants of this previous study questioned what they would do with their time once they retired.

**Communications with Family, Friends, and Co-workers**

Research regarding the positive impact of communications between police officers and their family, friends, and co-workers is lacking. Instead, research has focused on the impact of upward and downward communication in organizational settings and the impact of these communications on police officers’ work-life conflict (Duxbury, 2007; Duxbury & Higgins, 2012). Communications between police officers and their family, friends, and co-workers has likely been subsumed in the body of research on family support. In the current study, communications with these significant others was a distinct but related factor to support insofar as it facilitated these supports. Therefore this category is believed to augment existing literature on police identity processes.

Communicating with family, friends and co-workers entailed the communication of practical information to facilitate role performance and transitions. It was also important for some participants to share their values and life goals, making this category related to the Values and Personal Standards for Living / Parental Influence, Prioritization / Organization, Non-Police Support, and Family Support categories. This category is distinct from other support categories in that it was more than the spontaneous emotional and practical support by loved ones; it was the communication with supportive others that was helpful insofar as it allowed participants to vocalize their needs, which seemed to enhance their own awareness and provide them relief from the stress they were experiencing in a role.
As a wish list item, participants indicated desiring more opportunities to communicate with others and, conversely, to reduce technology-facilitated work communications outside of work. Another participant reported wishing that his elderly father would embrace technology to facilitate their ability to communicate with each other. Similarly, communication technology has been cited as helpful and hindering in another study of work-life conflict in police officers (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012). One could say that increased connectivity is good when one wants to be connected to a role and not good when one is trying to participate in another role. Duxbury and Higgins (2012) found that 79% of police officers reported reading and responding to work emails on their days off. One participant, who was married to a police officer, identified her husband’s virtual connection to work through multiple cellular phones as interfering with her ability to maintain her life roles. This incident was identified in a related category, Partner’s Hours, Work and Personal Demands. I suspect there would be different perspectives relating to technology in different age groups of police officers which would warrant additional investigation.

**Self-care**

There is a large body of literature that supports self-care and balanced living to mediate compassion fatigue in medical and counselling practice (Boyle, 2011; Gentry, 2002; Jones, 2005; Welsh, 1999; Showalter, 2010). Welsh (1999) refers to balanced living through self-care as responsible selfishness. However, limited research exists on how self-care impacts the identity processes of police officers. Therefore, this study adds to our knowledge of how self-care contributes to police officers’ identity processes. Research on self-care tends to relate to police officers’ coping with stress and traumatic stress on the job (Conn & Butterfield, 2013; Smith & Charles, 2010). One study found that RCMP police officers reported higher levels of burnout
when they were not able to exercise (Stearns & Moore, 1993). It is unclear if the inability to exercise led to burnout or if burnout led to the inability to exercise. Participants’ self-care practices seemed to contribute to their ability to maintain multiple roles by aiding them in managing the stress of juggling the roles. I find it interesting that only a couple of participants who identified self-care as helping or as a wish list item also identified their health status as influencing their maintenance of multiple life roles. This is likely owed to the fact that some of their identified forms of self-care did not relate to their physical health, but pertained to their mental or spiritual health. One participant who identified it as a wish list item in the self-care category cited her health as a helping factor. She wanted more resources, a gym, to help her take care of her health. The other participant who was represented in both categories cited self-care as helpful but his health as a hindering factor. His discussion of his health concerns seemed as though they were mostly historical while his discussion of self-care seemed to have evolved from this former period of compromised health.

**Flexible Recreation Hours**

This category was a novel finding in that no prior research appears to exist relating to how the flexibility of hours in recreational groups aids officers in managing their multiple life roles. It would appear that this category relates to the Work Hours category. Due to the variable nature of the participants’ work hours, participants found it to be helpful to have some flexibility with their hours to participate in their community and sporting team roles. Beyond the flexibility of the hours, it was the tolerance of their intermittent attendance that also seemed to allow them to participate in these roles.
Hindering Categories

There were 8 hindering categories, 5 of which met the suggested participation rate. In total, there were 126 hindering items within the 8 categories. I will discuss each of the categories in descending order based upon participations rates.

Work Hours

Police work required officers to work around the clock. For those participants who worked shift work, their hours were cited as hindering the maintenance of a broad identity. This finding is not surprising as other research has documented the difficult nature of shift work on police officers and their families (Demerouti, Geurts, Bakker, & Euwema, 2004; Duxbury, 2007; Duxbury & Higgins, 2012). Work hours represents the strongest hindering category, the second strongest wish list item and has the highest number of incidents cited. The five participants who identified work hours as a helping factor had set schedules, which included weekends off, or were able to control their schedule in order to participate in other roles. Having control over work schedules was supported by prior research which indicated that this control moderated police officers’ work-life conflict (Duxbury, 2007; Duxbury & Higgins, 2012).

Role Conflict

This category is well-supported by an abundant body of research on role conflict in policing. Duxbury and Higgins have documented work-to-family and family-to-work interferences in multiple large-scale studies of the RCMP (Duxbury, 2007; Duxbury & Higgins, 2001, 2003, 2012). They have found that the interference between family and work roles has increased over the years due to role overload. They determined that this interference resulted in less commitment to and satisfaction with their work, reduced family size, and higher levels of
stress (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001). Duxbury and Higgins delineate between two types of interference: 1) practical and 2) perceptual. Practical interference relates to limited time and scheduling conflicts while perceptual relates to the feelings of being overwhelmed or stressed by the demands of multiple roles (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001). The findings of this study are consistent with the notion of two-part interference. Participants gave examples of both practical and perceptual experiences of role conflict.

Boundary Theory (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000) may partially explain participants’ identification of role conflict as hindering their maintenance of a broad identity. For some participants, their supervisor role created role conflict because it took place in the same physical location where they were once professional equals and friends with those they currently supervise. This may contribute to role confusion in that it requires a psychological transition in an environment that is associated with different role behaviours. According to Boundary Theory, transitioning from the friend role to the supervisor role requires a role exit, which entails psychological disengagement from the friend role. It is suggested that a location change might be needed to shift the mindset. Some participants continued to work in the same location as before, possibly hindering their transition process from friend to supervisor. Typically, this dilemma has been mitigated with mandatory transfers once an officer is promoted. In fact, these transfers were identified by other participants as hindrances because they interrupted their non-police social supports and communications with them due to location changes. Unfortunately, it would appear that role conflicts created by promotions are sometimes mitigated by transfers that hinder participants’ social networks.

Participants also reported difficulty transitioning out of their work roles when they were entering their personal lives. According to Boundary Theory, changing roles entails rights of
transition, requiring a cognitive shift. This cognitive shift was difficult to achieve for some participants. One reported that his work and personal life seemed to amalgamate into one. This has been documented elsewhere in that work interferes with family more often than the reverse (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012). One participant identified the need to take time to transition from work to home, citing it as a form of self-care. I also found this in my study of police officers’ coping with secondary traumatic stress in that one participant reported having to create a transition-from-work-to-home-ritual to signal the transition of roles (Conn & Butterfield, 2013).

Seay’s (2009) elaboration of Mead’s (1934) notion of “functionalistic role” as applied to police officers might explain the difficulty participants reported when they attempted to enact their social roles and were met with the application of the functionalistic role of police officer by teammates or non-police others. The functionalistic role of police officer role draws attention from others due to the fact that police officers are highly visible with distinctive uniforms, experience media coverage of their work, and are oftentimes portrayed in movies and television. As such, the expectations of others who interact with police officers in social settings may be influenced by these depictions, leading them to reaffirm the functionalistic role of police officer instead of the social role of team player. The expectations of others likely contributed to the participants’ struggle to transition between these roles, causing them to feel hindered in performing the social roles.

**Police Culture**

The impact of police culture on individual police officers’ identities has been well-documented (Conti, 2009, 2011; Herbert 1998; Van Mannen, 2010). Conti (2011) found in a study of the socialization processes of police recruits that recruits evaluated each other on the basis of an idealized police officer whose competence and conformity to the norm is without
question. Herbert’s (1998) ethnographic study of police officers led him to the development of six normative orders in policing. One of the orders, competence, entails pulling one’s own weight. Participants in this study may not be considered to be conforming to the norm in that the norm in policing has been about to be overly dedicated to the job as demonstrated by one’s willingness to put in “face time” (Duxbury, 2007). Duxbury (2007) described the culture of the RCMP to be a “culture of face time” where officers are encouraged to put in more hours in order to seen as mirroring the behaviours of senior managers (p. 107). This likely explains how police culture hinders the participants’ ability to maintain a broad identity.

There are various theoretical models that might be applied to the impact of police culture on identity processes. Consistent with social identity theory, where there is an emphasis on the uniformity of perceptions, participants identified both the pressure to conform as well as the development of a perception of “us and them” as permeating their life roles and hindering their ability to maintain a broad identity. The spillover of police role behaviours influenced by police culture might be explained by the notion of “micro-transitions” from Boundary Theory (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). More specifically, it might be the absence of these transitions that accounts for the participants’ identification of events where their police role was being enacted during their personal time. Violanti’s (1997) aforementioned psychological model for suicide might also offer an explanation for the hindering impact of the police culture on maintaining a broad identity. Acquisition of the police role comes with the formal and informal pressure of restricting one’s identity to the police role and encouraging solidarity within the police system, to the exclusion of “others”, which includes both non-police persons and non-police behaviours. Making matters worse, beginning in the academy, police recruits are
socialized in a manner that seems to promote them from mere civilian to the glorified role of police officer (Conti, 2009).

The singular helping factor cited in this category was one participant’s identification of her police officer husband’s understanding of the culture. The wish list items call for a shift in the culture, where police culture promotes having multiple roles. My previous study on non-retiring first responders suggests that younger police officers may already be contributing to this cultural shift with non-conventional behaviours that appear to suggest more of a focus on balanced living (Conn, et al., 2015).

**Role Overload**

Role overload was not a surprising hindering factor. Although these participants identified as enjoying a wide range of occupational, social and personal roles, there appears to be times when participants were overloaded by the presence of multiple roles. In the second interview two participants reported that their balance of multiple roles had become imbalanced since the first interview, leading to a sense of feeling overloaded. For one, it was a decision to return to school that added to her sense of being overloaded. Identifying the finite nature of time to meet role demands is consistent with the literature on the scarcity of time contributing to role strain (Brody, 1990; Goode, 1960; Mui, 1992, 1995). Similarly, previous studies have found that police officers are overloaded at work and at home (Duxbury, 2007; Duxbury & Higgins, 2001, 2003, 2012; Duxbury, Higgins, & Halinski, 2015). Police officers have reported work role overload indicating that their overload was due to expectations to work outside of their mandate, non-supportive organizational culture, competing demands, and understaffing (Duxbury, Higgins, & Halinski, 2015). Participants in this study echoed these findings, reporting work outside their mandate, competing demands, and staffing shortages as hindering incidents in this
category. Women were found to have higher role overload but men were more likely to have work to family conflict (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001). Female participants comprised 43% of the participants in this category which was slightly above the overall proportion of females in this study (38%).

As a helpful factor, the inability to have children, requiring the performance of the parental role, enabled a participant to avoid the role overload she observed in her peers. Although not voluntary in this participant’s case, the reduction of family size to mitigate role overload has been documented elsewhere (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012). Another participant also spoke of not being able to have children but indicated that the absence of being responsible to another (possible children) hindered his ability to maintain a broad identity because he could not enact the parental role.

Operational Stress

Participants who identified operational stress as hindering indicated that the stress affected their management of the role system as well as the quality of their role performances. Research has shown that organizational stressors impact work-life balance (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012). Other research has demonstrated that operational stress impacts the quality of life roles and how the limited number of roles restricts officers’ ability to manage stress (Turner & Roszell, 1994; Turvey, 1996) but has not fully investigated how operational stress impacts the maintenance of the role system. Even Seay’s (2009) study of stress and police officers’ ability to transition between roles showed a mixed picture. Seay’s study found that participants endorsed symptomology stemming from operational stress but did not endorse difficulty in their identity or identity role transitions. Seay called for additional investigation of these findings, offering
two possible explanations for the findings: the officers were coping as they indicated they were
and still experienced the symptoms or they responded in a way to avoid appearing weak.

*Disruptive Events*

Despite the participants’ efforts to be proactive, organized, and making choices
consistent with their values, there were unavoidable events that interfered with their best-laid
plans. Only five participants (24%) identified incidents in this category but I believe that if
others were asked of the presence of disruptive events, they would likely be able to identify some
as interfering with their maintenance of their broad identity. The impact of these disruptions,
which included events such as bad weather, kitchen fires, unexpected demands at work or home,
and sustaining an injury, seemed to be short-lived.

This hindering category is not represented in previous research. The most relatable body
of research on disruptive events was discussed in the regrettable experience category, pertaining
to post-traumatic growth. These two categories are distinct in that the disruptive events cited in
this category were far less impactful, more routine occurrences. These events do not appear to
interrupt the participants’ identity system as much as they interfere with participants’ ability to
perform in these roles. Admittedly, these interferences could eventually lead to lasting impacts
on the role.

*Health*

Participants’ identification of poor health as hindering their ability to manage their roles
and good health as helping is not surprising. It appears that their health not only influenced their
management of the identity system but that it influenced the quality of their role performance.
Previous research has shown that work-to-home and home-to-work interference have a negative
impact on workers’ health (Mostert, 2009). It is not clear if the participants’ poor health simply was the cause of some of the difficulties they experienced in trying to meet competing demands or they were also the result of role interferences. Many of the participants were in their 40’s and seemed to have experienced a decline in their health, which was hindering them at the time of the interview. Duxbury and Higgins (2012) found that officers with poorer health had lower financial resources, less family support and organizational cultures that interfered with accessing help. Consistent with their findings, the four participants who identified their health as a hindering factor also endorsed their financial situation, family support and police culture as hindering factors.

**Partner’s Hours / Work and Personal Demands**

Overall, the findings in this category are consistent with the literature on dual-income families, where the demands of home are shared by both partners and the partners of police officers are working just as hard as they are (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012). For three participants, their partners’ work demands interfered with their life roles. One female participant who had previously identified technology as a hindrance because it allowed work to encroach on her personal life cited her husband’s use of technology to be in constant connection with his work as a hindrance in this category. This finding is consistent with another study that showed that female police officers were less likely to use work technology than men (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012). It is unclear why there is a gender difference in this finding.

Conversely, partner’s hours were also cited as helpful in that participants identified their partners’ work hours as helping them to participate in other roles. For instance, one partner’s shift work gave one the freedom to participate in other life roles while the partner was away. Another participant was also able to participate in various life roles due to his wife’s flexible
work hours. On the contrary, the flexible schedule of another participant’s wife’s was hindering in that it required the participant to accommodate her variable hours.

**Helping and Hindering Category**

There was one category with equal participation rates and incident numbers in both helping and hindering categories. I will discuss this category next.

**Financial Situation**

This finding that participants’ financial situation can be a hindering factor is supported by prior research. Previous research on police work-life conflict has shown that some officers attempt to promote purely to improve their financial situation (Duxbury, 2007). These promotions result in an increased workload which, in turn, decreases the officers’ work-life in balance. In addition to seeking promotions for monetary gain, police officers with financial concerns also reported working longer hours to make ends meet, which reduced their work-life balance (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001). Participants’ identification of their financial situation as a helping factor is also supported by prior research. Research has found that the majority of police officers are financially secure (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012).

The financial situation of participants seemed to be connected to the category, Role Overload, in that, as a helping factor, having financial resources allowed participants to decline overtime. Declining overtime allowed them to have more time to perform various roles. As a hindering factor, the lack of financial resources prohibited participants from engaging in activities due to limited funding to support these activities, which also generated additional financial resources as a wish list item. Having additional financial resources also meant that one
participant could retire sooner, which she believed would reduce the role overload that sometimes comes from working full time.

**Summary of Critical Incident Categories**

The critical incident categories include personal, organizational, the reciprocal personal-organizational dyad, and contextual factors. Personal factors were cited in the categories of values and personal standards for living / parental influence, responsibility to others, prioritization / organization, financial situation, focus / orientation, other interests, self-care, and health. Organizational factors were represented in the categories of work hours, organizational support, police culture, and psycho-education regarding policing / professional support. Reciprocal personal-organizational dyad factors, which seemed to fall somewhere between the participants and their work included the categories of regrettable experience, role overload, role conflict, work perspective, and operational stress. Contextual factors were cited in the categories of family support, communications with family, friends, and co-workers, non-police support, partner’s hours / work and personal demands, disruptive events, and flexible recreation hours.

As may be evident from the discussion of each category section, the demarcation of these factors into personal, organizational, personal-organizational, and contextual does not negate their interactional nature but, rather, illuminates that the aim of the study has been achieved.

This findings of this study build upon previous studies of work-life balance that had identified factors that contributed to and moderated police officer’s work-life conflict such as role overload, role conflict, work hours, and organizational support. Conducting interviews with police officers who identified as having balance to learn of how they achieve this confirmed prior knowledge and highlighted additional details only made possible by a qualitative approach. For instance, participants’ identification of how self-care impacted their ability to balance their
roles and how they took measures to be proactive, to be organized, and to act in accordance with their values have not been discussed in previous studies. The impact of their own regrettable experiences or the experiences of others on their identities was also a new finding. Additionally, this study augmented our knowledge of the impact of operational stress on the management of the role system while previous studies have focused on the impact on quality of life within the roles. Furthermore, the application of existing identity theories relating to conflict, salience, and transitions to the experiences described by these participants offers insights as to how these processes may take form with police officers who are navigating their careers.

**Limitations of the Study**

The current study, although methodologically sound, is tempered with limitations. One limitation is that all participants self-identified as having a broad identity. This was somewhat mitigated by the fact that some of them were actually identified as being a person with a broad identity and notified by the identifying person about the study. However, the identifying persons were not interviewed to validate the participants’ lifestyle factors contributing to a broad identity. Nor were family, friends, or co-workers interviewed to confirm the veracity of broad identity claims made by participants. Despite this, all participants were readily able to provide details and examples that supported their helping, hindering, and wish list factors.

Another limitation is that the majority of the interviews were conducted over the phone and, therefore, excluded nonverbal information. The format of the interview may have interfered with participants’ ability to disclose their responses. Additionally, some participants did not participate in the second interview, verifying that their data was correct and that information was not missing. The second interview was also conducted approximately ten months after the initial interview, due to the completion of interviews, transcribing, analyzing, and conducting other
credibility checks prior to the initiation of the second interview. This may have interfered with participants’ recollection of the initial interview. The full transcription was offered to each participant to aid them in recalling the original interview discussion and many participants indicated that the transcription was helpful in remembering their original responses. Lastly, the lack of racial and cultural diversity in the study sample limits the applicability of its findings to others.

**Study Implications**

The purpose of the study was to determine the factors that helped, hindered and might help police officers to maintain a broad identity. Identifying these factors contributes to our knowledge of the identity role processes of police officers. To date, research has not yet explored how some police officers are able to maintain a broad identity in a police culture that focuses on the singular police role. Additionally, it is important to understand these factors as they may reveal how mental health professionals and police organizations can support police officers’ efforts to maintain work-life balance and assist in removing the barriers to achieving this balance. I will begin with a discussion of implications for research.

**Implications for Future Research**

The research on police and police identity has focused on the negative impacts of narrowing identities or the impact of operational and organizational stress on police officers’ well-being. Little is known about the positive steps taken by police officers in maintaining their work-life balance. As such, there were several categories that were not directly supported by prior literature such as Values / Personal Standards for Living / Parental Influence, Prioritization / Organization, Focus / Orientation, Health, Disruptive Events, Psycho-education Regarding
Policing / Professional Support, Self-Care, and Other Interests. Tentative deductions can be made from some of the indirect research on these topics but each of these categories merit additional investigation. For instance, the preponderance of research documents police officers’ conformity to the values of the police group. The findings of this study offer a contrasting view of police officers’ adherence to their individual values to inform their role behaviour. Similarly, responsibility to others has been investigated as it hinders police officers’ work-life balance and has not been explored to determine how this sense of responsibility contributes to their work-life balance. Research on psycho-education in policing and professional support has largely focused on post-incident education and support, not preventative support as was reported here. Other interests, which includes hobbies, have been investigated from the perspective of their absence or how work interferes with their performance. Again, it has not been investigated as to how having other interests promotes work-life balance. Research on communications with family, friends, and co-workers is also lacking. Research on communications in policing tends to be focused on organizational communications patterns. Self-care and operational stress research has focused on police officers’ stress and traumatic responses, which are different than work-life balance and role overload as discussed here, suggesting additional research is needed. Police officers’ health has been investigated as it is impacted by work-life conflict. The impact of health on work-life conflict or balance still merits investigation.

There were also a few categories in this study that, although they were supported by previous research, warrant additional investigation. For instance, how do regrettable experiences impact the identity role system of police officers who do not identify as having a broad identity? What, if any, are the differences between officers whose identities broaden following a regrettable incident from those whose identities narrow or remain the same? It would be
important to explore the connections between regrettable experiences and post-traumatic growth. A grounded theory approach might generate a theoretical explanation of the relationship between these two concepts. Further investigation would be needed to determine the impact of disruptive events on police officers. Only a few participants mentioned this item but it is unclear if it is because the others did not think of this due to its random nature.

This study should be repeated with various police officer samples. For instance, it would be helpful to repeat the study with various age groups to investigate how the age of entry into the policing profession affects the identity change / constriction process. According to Burke (1991a), a well-established identity is better organized in the feedback process. By this rationale, a younger police recruit with a less well-established identity might have a different identity change process than an older police recruit with a more established identity. The average age of the participants, 43, was roughly the same as the average age of a police officer in Canada, which is 40 (Government of Canada, 2012). The average years of service was higher than anticipated with several officers having close to 30 years of policing experience. The average years of police service was attenuated by a couple of participants’ whose years of service would be considered outliers to the norm. It is unclear how the participants’ levels of experience might have impacted the study results. Additional studies directed at officers with less experience might produce different results.

Proportionally, there was a higher number of female police offices in the study sample than exists in the policing profession, 38% of study sample versus 20% in the Canadian police population (Statistic Canada, 2013) and 13% in the United States police population (U.S. Department of Justice, 2013). All female participants came from Canada. The exact reasons for this are not known and are only subject to speculation. Some of the female participants were
identified by others as persons they believed to demonstrate a broad identity and were notified of the study on this basis. It begs the question if female officers were selected by others due to their higher prevalence of having broad identities or a higher visibility of this lifestyle. It might also be important to repeat this study with partnerships where both partners are police officers to determine how they would navigate competing role demands.

There were also some differences in the proportion of participation rates by female participants in various categories that warrant additional investigation. For instance, females comprised two of the five (40%) participants endorsing their values, personal standards or parental influence as a hindering factor. One participant spoke of being an introvert while the other endorsed difficulty delegating tasks to others. Female participants also represented four of the five participants (80%) who identified their work hours as a helping factor. Female participants endorsed having fixed schedules as well as having control over their schedules. One of the participants was taking part in a job share program and enjoyed flexibility with her schedule. This is an interesting finding, given that six of the eight (75%) female participants also endorsed some aspect of their work hours as hindering. Female participants also represented seven of the nine (78%) participants who reported a helping incidents in the Prioritization / Organization category. It is unclear why female police officers identified prioritization of their roles more often than their male counterparts. Female participants comprised a majority of the responses in the Health category, accounting for 100% of the helping incidents and three of the four (75%) participants in the hindering category. Lastly, female participants represented three of the four (75%) participants citing helping incidents, half of the hindering incidents, and all of the wish list items in the Financial Situation category. Additional research should investigate
these differences to improve our understanding of how gender impacts identity processes in policing.

There were no differences in responses noted between Canadian and American participants. Future research might aim to explore if there are any differences in police officers from various locations. It might also be important to explore if there are any differences in work-life balance between police officers from urban and rural police agencies.

**Counselling Implications**

Counsellors who work with police officers would be well-advised to learn about the nature of police work, including shift work, police culture, and organizational practices and policies. This knowledge would facilitate their work with police officers who are struggling to maintain a broad identity. Counsellors could encourage police officers to connect or reconnect with non-police supports and facilitate communications between police officers and their family and friends. They could also assist police officers in exploring their personal values and views relating to their work identities in order to promote the intentional balancing of life roles. Hopefully, this purposeful construction would offset the documented tendency to depersonalize and conform to the police cultural values and viewpoints. Counsellors could also assist police families in planning for potential role spillover, difficulties with role transitions, and communicating the officers’ identified needs for performing various roles.

Counsellors are already accustomed to promoting self-care in clients across a variety of presenting concerns. They are also versed at promoting problem-solving and time management by encouraging clients to prioritize their competing demands as well as becoming organized and proactive. Mindful approaches which emphasize a focus on the present comprise a large
component of clinical work with clients across myriad concerns. Officers can be aided in creating a plan to manage their time and life roles well with practical strategies to be organized, proactive, and mindfully focused on their identified priorities.

Counsellors not only provide therapy to police individuals and couples, but they oftentimes also provide psycho-education regarding police work in police organization settings. It is paramount that they have a working understanding of the facilitative and hindering factors of maintaining a broad identity so they can share this knowledge with police recruits as well as seasoned officers. In another study conducted on non-retiring emergency service responders, participants stated that they wished they had received training on maintaining work-life balance earlier in their career so that they would be able to have balance when they retired (Conn, Amundson, Borgen, & Butterfield, 2015).

In response to the identified desire for access to professional services such as counselling, counsellors could increase their visibility and access by working closely with police agencies to ensure that officers are aware of their services and understand how they can access them. Making psycho-educational material available to police officers in the workplace as well as on the counsellor’s website might also contribute to police officers’ ability to maintain a healthy balance of life roles.

**Police Agency Implications**

The results of this study also generate several implications for police agency policies and practices. Two of the categories, Work Hours and Organizational Support, were identified by 67% and 38% of the participants, respectively. The Work Hours category had the largest rate of participation of any of the hindering categories, comprised of 24 hindering incidents, far
exceeding any other category’s hindering item count. One of the difficulties cited in the Work Hours category was rotating shift hours. Rotating shifts meant that participants’ days off and work hours were always changing. This translated to difficulty maintaining regular participation in other life roles such as participation in sporting teams and community or volunteer positions. Police agencies could offer fixed schedules where officers worked the same days and the same hours so that officers could plan their activities around this schedule.

Several police agency implications can be drawn from the Organizational Support category. There were helping, hindering and wish list items in this category that could inform police agency policies and practices. Several participants spoke of how their supervisor’s practical and emotional support was helpful. One helping factor cited was the provision of bereavement leave which allowed an officer to have time off to participate in his family role. Police agencies who provide practical support such as offering leave may be enhancing officers’ connectedness to family support which, in turn, has demonstrated to enhance their ability to manage stress from the job (Conn & Butterfield, 2013). Therefore police agencies might find that giving officers leave for such an occasion will provide a return in the form of the officer’s health, increased morale, and subsequently, work quality. Offering mandatory professional development training in a flexible format that minimizes interference with other life roles might also assist officers in maintaining balance. Admittedly, police agencies must manage time taken off by officers in order to operate on a 24 hour a day, 7 day a week, 365 day basis but there might be some leeway with respect to how leave policies permit officers adequate time off.

One specific recommendation that came from a participant in this study was the provision of support for female officers in the form of information or a mentorship about career trajectories of female officers who took maternity leave. Providing information or mentoring for the
potentially large role conflict of parenting and promoting might assist female (and even male) officers in managing this conflict and making informed choices based upon their priorities.

In addition to the practical support, police agencies might be well-advised to offer leadership training to police supervisors to aid them in understanding how their subordinate officers’ personal life role enactments might enhance their overall well-being and make them better employees. Hopefully, this awareness would facilitate their ability to be encouraging of their subordinates’ participation in various life roles. Officers might be more confident in their role performances if they felt supported in balancing work and personal life roles.

Police agencies might also consider providing education on work-life balance to all police employees as well as police families. Forming a partnership with a mental health professional to offer this support might also enhance officers’ awareness of available mental health resources. Participants indicated that they benefitted from receiving psycho-education about maintaining a balanced life to promote their well-being. Psycho-education regarding the impact of operational stress and the importance of self-care, health practices and proactive strategies for time management might also improve officers’ abilities to manage their life roles.

Additionally, promotional assignment practices that increase officers’ sense of influence over their work might also enhance their sense of self-efficacy and sense of control over their life roles. Specifically, participants spoke of wishing to have input into where they were assigned once promoted. Participants relayed being relocated without any regard for the hardship it might create in balancing work with other life roles. Making matters worse, it seemed that the relocations occurred on more than one occasion, disrupting participants’ routines, community
connections, and involvement in activities. Non-police support was disrupted due to the forced relocations.

Lastly, police organizations might also be able to contribute to a cultural shift in the policing profession that promotes work-life balance. Beginning in the police academy, officers are oftentimes told that they are police officers 24 hours a day 7 days a week, which likely fosters role confusion outside of the workplace. Some participants indicated that learning from others who had struggled with balance and had found ways to manage was helpful in their own development of managing life roles. Senior officers who have learned to balance their lives could provide guidance to police officer recruits in the academy and less seasoned officers during on-going training. A police agency administration that sanctioned this kind of training sends a message that the agency supports work-life balance. Additionally, bolstering support for peer support programs that promote healthy work-life balance, mentorship, and informational support might also be helpful to officers who are trying to maintain work-life balance. Including family and retirees in the peer support initiatives would also likely contribute to officers’ work-life balance efforts as families could become informed in ways to cultivate broad identities given the realities of police schedules. Including families in these initiatives might also assist them in appreciating the inherent difficulties in the police role and offer insights as to how to mitigate these difficulties.

Being cognizant of the impact of messages which are inadvertently sent through various practices such as promoting those that demonstrate over-commitment to the job have implications for practice changes in the promotion process. Campaigns that promote healthy living and community participation may also contribute to a shift in the focus on the police role and the “us and them” mentality. Organizational culture evolves over time and creating practices
and policies which might foster an emphasis on work-life balance would not likely result in any immediate impacts on the culture. However, over time, police agencies can encourage a cultural shift by being conscious of the messages they send to police officers beginning in the police academy.

Conclusions

The strengths-based focus of this study on police officers who identified as enjoying a range of occupational, social and personal roles produced a glimpse into the factors that influence identity processes such as prioritization, transition, and adjustments to conflict in order to maintain multiple identity roles. The findings of this study will be disseminated in scholarly and professional publications in hopes of generating additional discussions and research. I also hope to share these findings with various first responder organizations to include police, fire and emergency medicine agencies. I hope to share these findings with those in the counselling profession, particularly those that specialize in working with the first responder population. This might be accomplished through publication in career counselling journals.

Maintaining a healthy balance of occupational, social and personal roles is important for everyone. I believe maintaining a healthy balance is even more vital for police officers who may be challenged by a variable work schedule and daily exposure to operational and organizational stress. I hope the findings of this study stimulate additional investigation and, consequently, additional insights into how police officers can be successful in achieving work-life balance.
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Appendix A: Study Introduction Letter
Hello, my name is Stephanie Conn. I am a doctoral student at University of British Columbia, working on my dissertation, titled: What Helps, Hinders, and Might Help Police Officers to Maintain a Broad Identity. I recently left the policing profession after twelve years of service to pursue studies that will hopefully enable me to support those in this noble profession.

This study has three primary aims: 1) to determine the personal, situational, and organizational factors police officers believe contribute to their ability to maintain multiple life roles while working as a police officer, 2) to determine the personal, situational, and organizational factors they find hinder their ability to maintain multiple life roles while working as a police officers, and 3) to discover what police officers believe would help them to maintain multiple life roles, if it were available.

The participants of the study will include sworn, full-time, police officers/constables who have at least five years of experience as police officers. Participants must self-identify as maintaining multiple life roles since beginning their careers as police officers. Participants must also indicate that they are content with the number of their life roles.

As a result of discussing personal issues while participating in this study, there is minimal risk of participants experiencing some degree of stress. If any stress or discomfort is experienced as a result of participating in the study, participants are invited to speak to the researcher about their concerns so that they may be addressed appropriately. In terms of benefits, it is possible that participants may experience a certain degree of increased insight and self-awareness as a result of exploring and articulating their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. A possible additional benefit of participation is a contribution to existing literature and research about
maintaining multiple identity roles, which has demonstrated to improve psychological and physiological well-being.

Participants will be advised of the nature of the study, to include its purpose, and potential risks and benefits. Participants will be also be informed of the procedures in advance of the research study. Measures will be taken to ensure that participants are aware of the voluntary nature of the study by receiving a copy of the informed consent form and by an oral review of the consent form by the researcher. The participant will be made aware of his or her right to withdraw from the study at any time and will be instructed on how this can be accomplished.

I respectfully request permission from your department to post solicitation posters in police agency buildings to recruit participation with your officers/constables. To accommodate the participants, I am also requesting permission to use your facilities to conduct interviews for those who prefer police facilities in lieu of interview rooms at the University of British Columbia or other public facilities such as library meeting rooms.

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Stephanie Conn at XXX-XXX-XXXX, or her research advisor, Dr. Bill Borgen at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Conn
PhD Student, University of British Columbia
Appendix B: Consent Form
CONSENT FORM

WHAT HELPS, HINDERS, AND MIGHT HELP POLICE OFFICERS TO MAINTAIN A BROAD IDENTITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDY TEAM</th>
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</table>
| Principal Investigator: | Dr. William Borgen, Professor  
University of British Columbia  
Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, and Special Education  
(XXX) XXX-XXXX |
| Co-Investigators: | Stephanie M. Conn, M.A.,  
Doctoral Student, University of British Columbia  
Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, and Special Education  
(XXX) XXX-XXXX |
| | Dr. Marla Buchanan, Professor  
University of British Columbia  
Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, and Special Education  
(XXX) XXX-XXXX |

This research is for the purpose of a writing a dissertation as partial fulfillment of Stephanie Conn’s doctoral degree in counselling psychology. This dissertation will become a public document in the University library once completed. The results of this research may also be published in appropriate professional and academic journals.

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the factors that influence police officers’ abilities to maintain multiple identity roles such as police officer, parent, soccer coach, and friend. We hope that this information will inform organizational and counselling practices to promote police officers’ well-being. You have been asked to participate in this study based on your identification of having a broad identity consisting of multiple identity roles.
**HOW IS THE STUDY DONE?**

This study will require two interviews. The first interview will be approximately 90 minutes long. During this interview, you will be reminded of the purpose of the study and upon giving your signed consent for participation, you will be asked to describe your current situation and your experience of maintaining multiple identity roles, using an open-ended questions. You will then be asked to recall specific strategies that helped and hindered you in maintaining multiple identities during your years of service as a police officer. You will also be asked if there were things that might have been helpful to you but were not available. Finally, you will be asked to provide demographic information about yourself so that the study sample can be described in the final report. This interview will be audio recorded, assigned a code number to ensure confidentiality and transcribed. Upon completion of the study, all audio recordings and handwritten notes will be erased and destroyed.

The second interview will last approximately 30 minutes and will consist of a review of the categories discovered by the researcher. This interview may take place on the phone or via email, if you prefer. It will not be audio recorded. Your total time will be approximately two hours within a six to nine month period.

**RESULTS**

The results of this study will be reported in a doctoral dissertation and may also be published in journal articles and books. If desired, a summary of research findings will be made available to study participants. Participants may request a copy of the summary report from the principle investigator at the time of the first or second interview. Information that would identify participants will be removed prior to publication.

**POTENTIAL RISKS OF THE STUDY**

There are no anticipated risks to participating in this study. However, should you experience any distress in the course of the interviews, please let one of the investigators know of your distress or concerns. You always have the right to refuse to answer any questions and
withdraw consent at any time during the study. If you elect to withdraw your consent, you may choose for your information to still be included or to be omitted from the study.

**POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE STUDY**

We hope that you will benefit from participating in this study. We anticipate that exploring and discussing the factors that influence your ability to maintain multiple identity roles will be helpful in continuing to maintain a broad identity. We also hope that the knowledge gained from this study will help other police officers to maintain broad identities, resulting in improvements in psychological and physiological well-being.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information identifying individuals participating in this study will be kept confidential. Only the principal investigator and co-investigators will have access to the data. Members of the dissertation committee will have access to the final dissertation report. Upon signing the informed consent you will be given a code number to ensure the maintenance of confidentiality. Participants will not be identified by the use of names or initials in any reports of the completed study. All research documents will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office at the principle investigator’s home office. Computer data files will be password protected.

At any point in the study, if you reveal that there has been an incident that involves abuse and/or neglect of a child or an elderly person (or that there is a risk of such occurring) please be advised that the researcher must, by law, report this information to the appropriate authorities.

**COMPENSATION**

There will be no monetary compensation to participants other than appropriate reimbursement for parking or bus expenses incurred.
CONTACT FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY

If you have any questions or would like more information about this study, you may contact Dr. William Borgen (Principal Investigator) at (XXX)-XXX-XXXX; or Co-Investigator Stephanie Conn at (XXX) XXX-XXXX; or Co-Investigator Dr. Marla Buchanan at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

CONTACT FOR CONCERNS ABOUT THE RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at XXX-XXX-XXXX or if long distance e-mail XXXXXXXXXX or call toll free X--XXX-XXX-XXXX.

CONSENT

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice of any kind.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

________________________________________________________
Participant Signature   Date

________________________________________________________
Printed Name of the Participant signing above

I agree to be contacted in the future for research participation in similar studies by the same researcher.

Initials:_____Date: ______________

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study.
Appendix C: Recruitment Poster
A Study Exploring Police Officers who Maintain Multiple Identity (Life) Roles

The purpose of this research project is to give police officers who have maintained multiple identity (life) roles throughout their career the opportunity to describe their experiences. It also provides individuals with an opportunity to discuss what has helped or hindered them in the process of maintaining multiple life roles and what might be helpful to them, if it were available.

The investigator for this study is Stephanie M. Conn, XXX-XXX-XXXX. Stephanie is being supervised by Dr. Bill Borgen, XXX-XXX-XXXX, and Dr. Marla Buchanan, XXX-XXX-XXXX, Professors in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia.

We would be interested in hearing your experience of maintaining multiple identity (life) roles IF:

- You are a police officer with at least five years police experience
- You identify as having multiple identity (life) roles
- You identify as being content with the number of identity (life) roles
- You are currently working or have worked in the last six months
- You are willing to talk about your experiences relating to maintaining multiple identity roles in a confidential 90-minute interview.

If you would like to participate, or would like further information about this study, please contact Stephanie Conn by email at or by phone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.
Appendix D: Pre-Screening Interview
Pre-Screening Interview

1. Have you worked a continuous five years as a police officer? □Yes □ No

2. Do you read, write, and speak English fluently? □ Yes □ No

For this study, broad identity refers to enjoying a range of occupational, social and personal roles.

3. Do you believe that you have a broad identity?

4. Are you content with the number of identity (life) roles you have?

5. If answered no to any of these questions, will respond with the following: This study is designed to study the experience of a specific group of police officers. Although I appreciate your interest in participation, because of (name exclusion/ lack of inclusion criteria) I will not be able to include you in this study.

6. If answered yes to all of these questions, advise that he/she meets the criteria for inclusion in the study and I would like to arrange to send the informed consent form for the participant to read, and to set up a time for the first interview.

Participant Number Assigned: _______________________

Participant Contact Information:

Email: _________________________________

Telephone Number(s): _________________________________________

Address (for mailing informed consent) ____________________________________________________________________
Appendix E: Participant Demographic Information
Participant Demographic Information

Date of Discussion: ______________________________

1. Age: ______________

2. Gender: □ Male □ Female □ Other ________________

3. Years of police service: _______________________

4. What is your current assignment?

Patrol: ___ Investigations: _____ Special Operations: ____ Community Policing: _____
Administration: _____

5. What is your current rank? _________________

5. Marital Status: ______________________________

6. Do you have children? □ Yes □ No

7. Combined Household Income: ______________________________

8. Country of Birth: _________________

a. If not Canada, length of time in Canada: _________________

9. First language: ______________________________

10. Highest level of education attained: _________________________________

Interview End Time: _____________________________
Appendix F: Contextual Interview Protocol
Contextual Interview Protocol

Participant # _____________________________ Date: ___________________

Interview Start Time: ______________________

1 Contextual Component

Preamble: As you know, I am investigating what helps, hinders, and might help police officers maintain broad identities. This is the first of two interviews, and its purpose is to collect information about your identity roles and what has helped, hindered, or might have helped you maintain a broad identity. For this study, broad identity refers to enjoying a range of occupational, social and personal roles. Identity roles is defined as the meanings a person attributes to the self as an object in particular interactional settings. Examples of common identity roles include parent, partner, community member, volunteer, or coach.

1) Tell me about your work.

2) What are your identity roles?

3) On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with the identity roles you just described?

4) Is there anything that would make them better? If so, what would that be?

5) Have these identity roles changed since you began policing?

a) If so, how have they changed?

6) If you had to pick an identity role as more important than the others, which one would it be and why?
Appendix G: CIT Interview Protocol
CIT Interview Protocol

Participant: # ____________________________ Date: ___________________
Interview Start Time: _____________________

1) What helps you maintain a broad identity?

(Potential probe questions: “How is it helpful?”, “Can you give me an example of how it helped?” and “How is that important?”)

2) What hinders your ability to maintain a broad identity?

(Potential probe questions: “How is it hindering?”, “Can you give me an example of how it hindered?” and “How is that important?”)

Summarize the helpful and hindering factors the participant discussed with respect to his or her coping with secondary traumatic stress on the job to transition to the wish list items.

So far we’ve talked about the things that help you to cope (name them) and the things that hinder your ability to cope (name them).

3) What might help you maintain a broad identity, if it were available?

(Potential probe questions: “How would it be helpful?”, “Can you give me an example of how it might help?” and “How is that important?”)

Interview End Time: _____________________________
Length of Interview: _____________________________
Interviewer’s Name: _____________________________
Appendix H: Participant Cross-Check Interview
Participant Cross-Check Interview

Participant: # ____________________________ Date: ___________________

Interview Start Time: _____________________

Preamble: As you may remember from our initial interview, research participants are asked check my interpretation of the data extracted from the first interviews. To this end, I have a few questions regarding your thoughts on how the data has been interpreted.

1. Are the helping/hindering critical incidents and wish list items correct?

2. Is anything missing?

3. Is there anything that needs revising?

4. Do you have any other comments?

2. Do the category headings make sense to you?

3. Do the category headings capture your experience and the meaning that the incident or factor had for you?

4. Are there any incidents in the categories that do not appear to fit from your perspectives? If so, where do you think they belong?
Appendix I: Transcriptionist Confidentiality Contract
Transcriptionist Confidentiality Agreement

I, ______________________________ transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentations received from Stephanie M. Conn related to her research study on the doctoral dissertation titled What Helps, Hinders, and Might Help Police Officers to Maintain a Broad Identity. Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents.

2. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized titles of the transcribed interviews texts, unless specifically requested to do so by the researcher, Stephanie M. Conn.

3. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession.

4. To return all audiotapes and study-related materials to Stephanie M. Conn in a complete and timely manner.

5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any back-up devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally responsible for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber’s name (printed) __________________________________________________

Transcriber's signature __________________________________________________

Date __________________________________________