

Law Enforcement Officer Burnout and Marital Satisfaction:

An Examination of Emotional Processes

by

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ABSTRACT

Emotion-related processes are a pivotal piece in establishing a holistic evaluation of interpersonal and intrapersonal outcomes due to stress. These processes are especially relevant for law enforcement officers (LEOs) who are required to regulate their emotions in the context of their personal lives and their job. The emotion suppression tendencies fostered by LEO culture may be exhibited in marital interactions, especially if LEOs perceive that their spouse does not understand their job (described here as spousal job misunderstanding [SJM]). The associations between LEOs believing their spouse misunderstands their job and their reported marital satisfaction and burnout levels may be explained through emotion suppression tendencies when with their spouse. This study examined whether the extent LEOs felt their spouse misunderstood their job was associated with marital satisfaction and burnout; whether those associations were mediated by the extent LEOs hid their feelings from their spouse; and, for burnout, whether effects were conditionally mediated at different levels of social support. Study analyses were conducted in separate groups according to gender, using survey data from 76 male and 26 female LEOs. In line with hypotheses, significant relationships between SJM and LEOs hiding their feelings were found. Mediation analyses revealed significant associations between SJM and marital satisfaction in both males and females, and this association was mediated by the extent LEOs hid their feelings from their spouse in male LEOs only. In a conditional mediation model, SJM was not associated with LEO burnout, but conditional indirect effects were found for male LEOs. Unexpectedly, indirect effects of LEOs hiding their feelings from their spouse were significant at mean and high levels of social support, but not at low levels. These results indicate the

relevance of emotion regulation in the context of burnout, marital satisfaction, and social support, and how the opportunity for solving issues in policing and LEO-specific emotional difficulties may be found in novel interventions focused on these constructs.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Different career paths require a variety of skills and responsibilities. Some societal roles and careers are more interpersonally interactive and can potentially yield higher levels of stress compared to others. Law enforcement officers (LEOs) are an example of individuals who generally experience a significant amount of stress, which can negatively impact emotion regulation and lead to negative outcomes, both personally and interpersonally (Krannitz et al., 2015; Kwak et al., 2018). In day-to-day work settings, LEO emotional consequences are observed, as their job requires frequent use of emotion regulation strategies, such as emotion control or suppression, that have the potential to increase job burnout and negatively impact social relationships (Karaffa et al., 2014; Kwak et al., 2018). Additionally, some of these interpersonal difficulties can stem from the non-LEO partner's misunderstanding of the LEO's role while the LEO struggles to maintain a healthy work-family balance (Ferguson et al., 2016). This study helps to identify how LEO emotion-related processes have the potential to influence their marriages and feelings of burnout.

LEOs serve to maintain peace and order within society, as well as directly interact with lawbreakers to enforce the rule of law. Consequently, the enormous responsibility for law enforcement and their success in policing can be potentially hindered by both intrapersonal and interpersonal difficulties. The goal of this study was to identify among married LEOs, whether the perception that their spouse does not understand their job is associated with greater officer burnout and marital dissatisfaction, and how these

intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics may also interact with LEO emotion-related processes.

Spousal Job Misunderstanding

Communication is an important part of maintaining relationships, especially marital relationships. Two spouses may have different communication styles and different information to communicate, but the fact remains that communicating with your spouse is necessary for a positive relationship (Askari et al., 2012; Ledermann et al., 2010). Miscommunication or lack of communication within a couple creates opportunities for conflict (e.g., arguments, mistrust) which can lead to marital strife and potential dissolution (Gravningen et al., 2017). A specific point of conflict in a relationship may stem from an extension of poor communication where two spouses misunderstand one another. Misunderstanding one's spouse can be a result of numerous factors, but a likely cause would be a spouse failing to communicate specific information to the other.

When we think about how someone may misunderstand their spouse, we have to consider what was misunderstood and potentially why it was misunderstood. There are many components to understanding someone, but when it comes to a relationship, the expectations of what is and should be understood may vary. For example, in the context of LEO relationships, the LEO's spouse may understand the general role the LEO plays in society, but they may not fully understand what it is like to be a LEO. This sentiment is expressed by LEOs in interviews conducted by Finn and Tomz (1997) where LEOs indicated the lack of understanding from their family as a significant stressor. Spousal job misunderstanding is not a thoroughly researched construct, but there is potential it

may influence or be influenced by a LEO's inclination to share about their job with their spouse.

There are multiple reasons a LEO may withhold information about their job from their spouse. LEOs may be unable to share details about their job with their spouse in order to maintain the confidentiality of a case, but potentially to protect their marriage as well (Brodie & Eppler, 2012). LEOs are often the individuals responsible for taking care of traumatic, horrifying events, and although they may want to share with their spouse, they may feel they are unable to (Karaffa et al., 2014).

When a LEO withholds information from their spouse, they may be actively protecting their spouse from the realities of their job, but this, in turn, may lead to spousal job misunderstanding. Spousal job misunderstanding (SJM) is defined as the extent an officer (a) feels their spouse misunderstands the LEO's job and (b) wishes for their spouse to understand more. This construct stems from the concept of work-family conflict where an individual may have conflicting responsibilities in the different roles of their life. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) describe work-family conflict as an instance where the responsibilities required of the two domains clash and create potential familial and work difficulties.

SJM is a potential piece to understanding specific relationship dynamics between LEOs and their spouses. Understanding one's spouse and their job may foster a sense of support within the relationship. This concept of understanding and the potential for improved relationship-specific outcomes can be seen in couples who share an occupation. Research suggests that couples who share an occupation or career experience greater spousal support, work-family balance, and family and job satisfaction (Ferguson et al.,

2016; Janning, 2006). SJM fits into this shared-career dynamic as the two LEOs would be better equipped to empathize with their spouse, which could directly benefit their marriage and how they manage job-related stress.

As SJM increases within a marital relationship, it may present potential opportunities for marital conflict and individual, LEO-related difficulties. If LEOs feel their spouse misunderstands their job, they may be less inclined to share, fearing their spouse will continue to misunderstand. If LEOs are unable to share about their work life with their spouse, it may predict negative personal and marriage-specific outcomes. In a high-stress profession with potentially traumatizing experiences, it may be especially difficult for LEOs to destress from work if they feel they are unable to share their feelings about their job with their spouse.

Consequences of LEO Emotion Regulation Strategies

As a LEO, maintaining composure is important while in the station and out interacting with the public. Digging deeper into these requirements to maintain composure lies the reality that officers may have to consistently regulate emotions in various contexts. LEOs interact with different people on a daily basis, all with potentially different expectations of LEO demeanor. A significant portion of interpersonal communication is also expressed through emotion (Fischer & Manstead, 2016). When considering the interaction between law enforcement and the general public, LEO emotion regulation is important to consider as the appearance LEOs present to the public, are partially contingent upon the types of emotions LEOs choose to express. These perceptions may be inconsistent with an individual's emotional expectations which may influence interactions between LEOs and the public.

While at work, LEOs are expected to carry out their duties without letting their emotions show. This is not an easy task, as LEOs not only engage with victims, suspects, and people who have committed crimes, all of whom may have emotional difficulties themselves (Kwak et al., 2018; van Gelderen et al., 2011), but also have to navigate interactions with coworkers and report to superiors (Tsai et al., 2017). Then, after a shift with everchanging experiences and opportunities for stressful interactions, LEOs have emotional and role-related expectations from their family as well. The incongruence in these emotional expectations can lead to what is known as emotional dissonance.

Emotional dissonance is defined as the difference in the emotions an individual displays and the emotions they actually feel (Abraham, 1999). The opportunity for emotional dissonance to manifest in a LEO stems from these different expectations for how they emotionally express themselves as an officer, work colleague, and family member.

The presence of LEO emotional dissonance indicates an active manipulation of how they express their emotions. This construct ties in closely with emotional labor as LEOs are actively regulating their emotions in accordance with the expectations of their law enforcement organization (van Gelderen et al., 2011). Emotion suppression is also a factor of emotional dissonance that needs to be considered regarding their laborious emotion regulation. When LEOs are actively suppressing their emotions to satisfy the emotional expectations of others, it can potentially lead to negative intrapersonal and interpersonal outcomes, as found in studies of emotion suppression more broadly (Gross & John, 2003). In specific situations, emotion suppression can be seen when LEOs are in a heightened arousal state.

Furthermore, LEOs may employ additional counterproductive emotion regulation practices, depending on the context of the emotion stimulus. Research has shown officers may avoid situations that could cue negative emotions (such as instances where they would have to accept or recognize their negative affect) and have also been found to report significantly poorer emotion regulation compared to the general public (Berking et al., 2010). Attempting to situationally avoid specific emotions allows officers to protect themselves from not only feeling these emotions, but it also keeps them from having to mask them. Eliminating the need to mask emotions by simply avoiding those negative emotion-prompting situations provides a short-term solution to a potentially chronic issue. LEOs have also been found to avoid emotions through substance abuse. Ménard and Arter (2013) found LEOs are more likely to employ maladaptive coping strategies (such as substance abuse) as the number of critical incidents and work-related stress increases.

LEOs may feel suppression or avoidance are the best courses of action in managing negative emotions, but these emotion regulation strategies could prove to be detrimental to their overall well-being. A study conducted with Australian police officers found LEOs with increased emotional intelligence, where LEOs were better equipped to express and regulate emotions, saw direct benefits to their well-being (Brunetto et al., 2012). These findings highlight some potential shortcomings in LEO emotion regulation strategies and where we can begin to mitigate LEO emotion-related difficulties.

Straining a LEO Marriage

Work-related stress is not limited to the workplace, as it has the potential to impact others in a LEO's social network. Research has shown the spillover effects of

stress can negatively impact personal relationships, such as married or partnered relationships (Roberts et al., 2013). More specifically, work-related stress can negatively impact communication and emotion regulation within a LEO relationship (Tuttle et al., 2018). If work-related stress is not managed effectively, then the stress itself has the potential to strain a relationship to the point of dissolution. Although divorce is a potential specific outcome of relationship dissatisfaction, it is also important to examine relationship characteristics that also serve as a measure of relationship quality (Fowers et al., 2016). Regardless of whether people maintain or end a marriage, while these couples are together, it is beneficial to examine the potential causes of relationship strife, which in itself has potential consequences (Brown, 2010).

Emotion Regulation and Marriage. If stress is a significant predictor of relationship strife, what might be the mechanisms through which stress impacts a relationship? In a marriage, there are emotional expectations between partners and these expectations may add more emotional labor to an individual who chronically, actively regulates their emotions. In a specific example, a LEO may be returning home after an emotionally-taxing shift and may feel particularly negative about their day, their job, their superiors, etc. Although the LEO is experiencing negative emotions, there may be a spousal expectation to leave their work at work and now step into the role of a family member and spouse. This sort of situation exemplifies the potential for additional stress due to emotional labor when the LEO struggles to “leave their badge behind” when they come home. Prior research has supported the idea that LEOs may carry their job stress home with them (Roberts & Levenson, 2001), which then can negatively impact marital interactions (Randall & Bodenmann, 2017; Tuttle et al., 2018). When we jointly consider

the literature on stress spillover, work-family balance, and emotional labor, it points to the potential association between LEO emotion regulation tendencies and their reported marital satisfaction. In a profession where emotion suppressive tendencies are fostered for specific emotions, it is possible these tendencies not only rollover into marriage but may negatively impact it as well.

Burnout

Burnout is an extremely relevant threat to individuals exposed to chronic stress. Burnout is defined as a psychological syndrome reflected in three dimensions of affective experience: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1998). This construct has been studied extensively in the past, especially in the context of law enforcement. In this study, LEO burnout is present when stressors exceed LEOs' ability to cope with stress.

In order to combat stress and to avoid feelings of burnout, individuals will employ coping mechanisms. There are different types of coping strategies, some beneficial and some potentially harmful. Research has shown LEOs may employ ineffective or unhealthy coping strategies as a result of their compounded stress. A study conducted by Ballenger et al. (2011) found in a sample of 747 officers, 18% of male officers and 16% of female officers reported struggles with alcohol abuse and approximately 8% met criteria for lifetime abuse/dependence. These strategies for managing stress target the feelings of being overwhelmed with stress in an unhealthy way. A short-term solution to burnout may have long-term impacts on the LEO personally and on their social network.

Burnout and Emotion Regulation. Emotion regulation may be a pivotal aspect of addressing harmful coping strategies. Harmful coping strategies often stem from a

LEO's inability to come to terms with their feelings, as they may feel confused about their emotions or believe that others could not understand what they are going through. The ways in which LEOs deal with their stress suggest that some of their feelings of burnout stem from ineffectively regulating their emotions. The repeated active regulation of emotions and navigating the effects of an imbalance between their personal and professional lives may lead to increased burnout as well. A study conducted by Bakker and Heuven (2006) highlights the links between emotional demands and emotional dissonance, burnout, and in-role performance. In-role performance was defined as an organization's official, required outcomes and behaviors of their employees that serve organizational objectives (Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994). Through structural equation modeling, Bakker and Heuven examined the associations between these constructs further and found emotional demands of a LEO's job predicted variance in burnout and negative in-role performance through their emotional dissonance.

Additionally, research on Dutch police officers revealed suppression of negative emotions (e.g. anger, sadness) led to greater feelings of exhaustion at the end of the work day (van Gelderen et al., 2011). Further, they found emotional dissonance mediated the relationship between emotional job demands and exhaustion. Research on a sample of health and social workers found significant associations between emotional dissonance and exhaustion, and emotional dissonance and mental distress (Indregard et al., 2018). These findings taken together point to clear ties between emotion regulation and experiencing feelings of burnout. The solution to mitigating burnout in law enforcement may be multifaceted, but there may be an avenue for interventions in the context of emotion regulation.

Burnout and Social Support. The emotional demands of an already stressful career clearly contribute to LEO overall well-being. If emotion-related processes are associated with burnout within the context of an individual LEO, how could these associations vary when branching out in the LEO's social network? Specifically, is there potential for LEO burnout effects that could be systematically eliminated through emotion regulation training in the context of their social network?

Although LEOs are required to interact with a great number of people associated with their job, they may also find a sense of belonging and receive support from their social network. Social networks vary from person to person, but in law enforcement, like many other social services, officers find a sense of community that rivals that of a family. In addition to non-work friends and family, fellow LEOs make up a network to provide social support. Social support is defined as the extent officers perceive support from their social networks in the form of tangible support, increased belonging, self-esteem, and appraisal support (Cohen et al., 1985). When considering the shared experiences between law enforcement colleagues, social support may be relevant when discussing LEO emotion-related processes and constructs related to well-being.

Social support research supports the idea that a strong social network is important in multiple psychological processes. Some examples where social support is relevant are affect, well-being, and self-efficacy. Specifically in law enforcement populations, studies have shown positive associations between LEO psychological well-being and both perceived and received support from colleagues (Jackman et al., 2020; McCanlies et al., 2018). Research has also shown self-efficacy moderates the relationship between emotional demands and burnout where health- and social workers with low efficacy

experienced higher levels of exhaustion and mental distress (Indregard et al., 2018). Research from Gayathri and Karthikeyan (2016) found social support from family and work colleagues were positively associated with both self-efficacy and life satisfaction for employees. The culmination of this research in the context of this study introduces the possibility that the relationship between specific emotion-related processes and burnout may vary due to the social support received by the LEO.

An Exploratory Look at Gender Differences

Gender differences have been established in many domains and some of these differences are likely to present themselves when conducting research on LEOs and their emotion-related processes. According to Duffin (2020), about 73% of all law enforcement employees are male. In a male-dominated field, it is important to consider how the previously mentioned relationships among constructs may vary by gender.

Research has shown emotion expression varies between men and women depending on the context and social expectations from others (Barrett & Bliss-Moreau, 2009; Brody & Hall, 2008). For example, in conflict situations, anger often plays a part in driving the interaction where men and women may respond differently. Fischer and LaFrance (2015) postulate conflict situations may induce more feelings of powerlessness in women compared to men. They also found a lower correlation between smiling and positive affect in women, which they suggest may be based on gendered emotional expectations (Fischer & LaFrance, 2015). Research on emotion regulation tendencies between men and women have also shown women utilize more emotion regulation strategies and are more flexible in their use of different strategies depending on the situation (Goubet & Chrysikou, 2019). These findings highlight potential differences that

may be found regarding emotion regulation due to different social contexts and expectations in law enforcement. This phenomenon is examined more specifically in that female LEOs may not maintain the same strategies as male LEOs regarding emotion-related processes while at work. Research has shown female LEOs are less likely to assimilate hypermasculine beliefs into their identity compared to male LEOs (Schuck, 2014). Some of these hypermasculine beliefs found more commonly in male LEOs included prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes toward female colleagues as well as physical force while on-duty as a way to maintain social control.

In a marital context, Bloch et al. (2014) found increased marital satisfaction as a result of effective regulation of wives' emotions. Specifically, the wives' downregulation of emotions in conflict predicted marital satisfaction. They also found that wives' constructive communication mediated the association between emotion regulation and marital satisfaction for both spouses. The research from Bloch and colleagues does not consider spouses' careers and the literature on LEO emotion regulation in the context of their relationship is sparse. However, gender differences in emotion regulation strategies and beliefs about emotion expression point to potential variation in LEO emotion regulation. We therefore tested gender differences using an exploratory framework.

Current Study

The current study aimed to identify how emotion-related processes in the context of a marital relationship are related to a LEO's individual assessments of their personal and interpersonal well-being. The study was conducted through an online self-report survey. The models associated with the following hypotheses are found in *Figure 1* and *Figure 2*. It was hypothesized that:

H1: Higher levels of SJM will be associated with lower marital satisfaction.

H2: Higher levels of SJM will be associated with higher levels of officer burnout.

H3: Higher levels of SJM will be associated with greater LEO reports of hiding their feelings from their spouse

H4: The associations between SJM and marital satisfaction, and between SJM and burnout, will be mediated by the extent LEOs hide their feelings from their spouse.

H5: Social support will moderate the mediation of LEOs hiding their feelings on officer burnout in that social support will attenuate this relationship. (Moderated mediation effects were hypothesized for burnout only, and not for marital satisfaction.)

Age, overall trait-like emotion suppression, and overall job stress were included as covariates in all models.

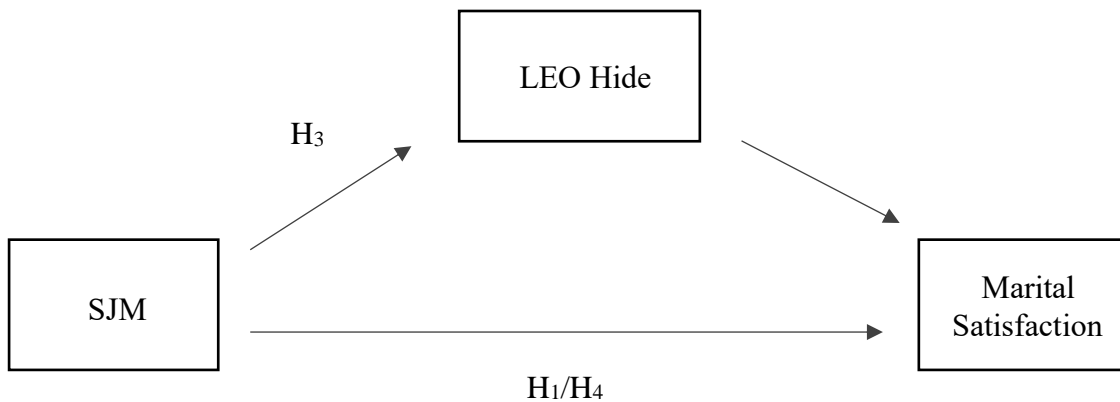


Figure 1. LEO Hide mediating the association between SJM and Marital Satisfaction.

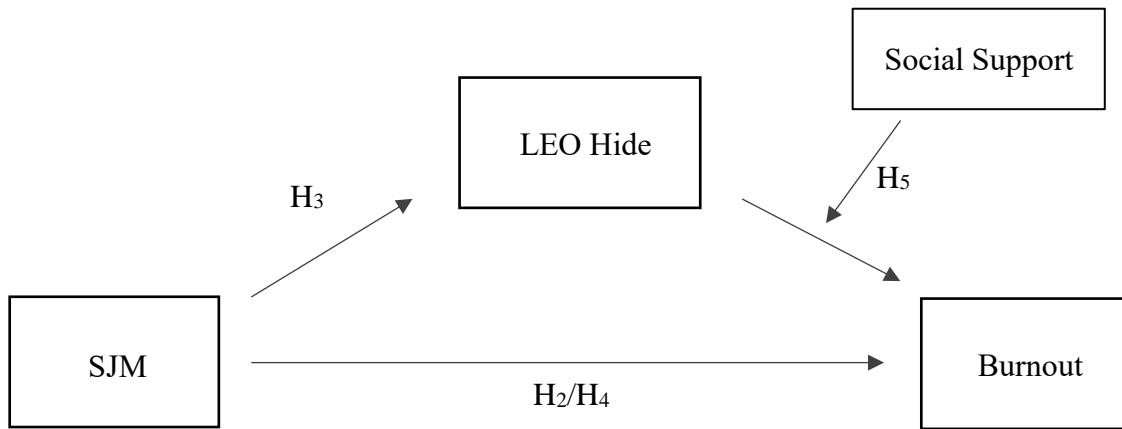


Figure 2. LEO Hide conditionally mediating the association between SJM and Burnout at varying levels of Social Support.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

Participants for this study were 142 married or romantically partnered law enforcement officers (104 males, 40 female). Only 102 LEOs (76 males, 26 females) filled out two or more measures of interest. Participant age ranged from 21 to 51 years with a mean age of 36.1 ($SD = 6.14$) years. The ethnic background consisted of mostly European Americans (86.5%). Participants were recruited for this survey study via social media, word of mouth, and announcements at precincts.

Procedures

Participants completed the online survey administered through a secure website, SurveyMonkey.com. Participation was voluntary but the option to be entered into a raffle for a \$100 gift card was offered to participants as well.

Measures

Questionnaires relevant to the current study are described below; others were administered as part of a larger study.

Demographics

We asked participants to provide information about their sex, age, race, education, income, and general information about their career as a LEO and about their relationship.

This information can be found in Table 1.

Table 1.

Demographics

	All LEOs (<i>N</i> = 102)	Male LEOs (<i>n</i> = 76)	Female LEOs (<i>n</i> = 26)	
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>p</i> _{diff}
Age	36.1 (6.9)	37.0 (7.2)	35.7 (7.8)	.45
Hours worked per week	47.2 (7.6)	47.8 (7.9)	45.6 (7.3)	.29
Years on force	11.2 (5.9)	11.8 (6.4)	10.6 (5.8)	.46
Years married	8.7 (6.1)	9.0 (6.1)	7.55 (6.2)	.39
Income	8.6 (2.4)	8.7 (2.2)	8.52 (2.8)	.78

Note. *p*_{diff} = significance (two-tailed) of the difference in means for each measure.

Spousal Job Misunderstanding

In order to measure spousal job misunderstanding (SJM), we developed a measure (LEO Spousal Job Misunderstanding Scale; *Table 5*) comprised of 10 items rated on a Likert scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*all the time*). Higher scores on this measure reflect higher levels of perceived spousal job misunderstanding and a sense of wanting their spouse to understand more. Cronbach's alpha reflected good reliability for this measure, with a value of $\alpha = .88$ (Taber, 2018).

LEO Hiding Feelings from Spouse

The second lab-developed measure (the LEO Hiding Feelings Questionnaire; *Table 6*) included in the survey was a 5-item measure created to measure the extent an officer hides their feelings from their spouse (LEO Hide). The items were rated on a Likert scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*all the time*). Higher scores reflected a greater tendency

to hide one's feelings from their spouse. Cronbach's alpha reflected an excellent reliability level for this measure, with a value of $\alpha = .92$ (Taber, 2018).

Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction was measured using the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (Fowers & Olson, 1993). The EMS is a 10-item scale that measures different aspects of relationship quality. The items are rated on a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher EMS scores reflect higher marital satisfaction. Cronbach's alpha for these 10 items reflected a good reliability level (Taber, 2018) where $\alpha = .83$.

Burnout

Officer burnout was measured using a 13-item scale by Schaible and Gecas (2010), which was adapted from the 22-item MBI (Maslach et al., 1998). Schaible and Gecas eliminated items they found to be redundant, thus, we used their abridged version, as their factor loadings were consistent with the dimensions found in the MBI. The items are rated on a Likert scale from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*all the time*). Higher scores on this inventory reflect higher feelings of officer burnout. Cronbach's alpha for these 13 items reflected an acceptable reliability level ($\alpha = .76$; Taber, 2018).

Social Support

Social support was measured using a 6-item scale (Newsom & Schulz, 1996) adapted from the 40-item ISEL (Cohen et al., 1985). The inventory is comprised of three subscales: belonging, self-esteem, and appraisal. The fourth subscale, self-esteem, was not included in the scale produced by Newsom and Schulz. The items are rated 1 (*definitely false*) to 4 (*definitely true*). Higher scores reflect higher perceived social

support. Cronbach's alpha for these six items reflected an acceptable reliability level ($\alpha = .79$; Taber, 2018).

Covariates

Trait-like Emotion Suppression. Trait-like emotion suppression was measured using the 4-item expressive suppression subscale of the 10-item Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ; Gross & John, 2003). The items are rated on a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores reflect a greater tendency to suppress emotions. Cronbach's alpha for these four items reflected an acceptable reliability level ($\alpha = .80$; Taber, 2018).

Job Stress. Overall job stress was measured using the Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ; McCreary & Thompson, 2006). The questionnaire includes 40 items rated on a Likert scale from 1 (*not at all stressful*) to 7 (*very stressful*) and measures operational and organizational stress for police officers. Operational stress makes up 20-items in the questionnaire and is defined as the stress the officer experiences due to their role duties as a LEO. Organizational stress makes up the other 20 items and is defined as the stress experienced due to administration, superiors, coworkers, and department policy. Cronbach's alpha for these four items reflected an excellent reliability level ($\alpha = .96$; Taber, 2018).

Data Analyses

Study hypotheses were tested by conducting one mediation and one moderated mediation analysis, using the PROCESS macro v.3 (Hayes, 2018) in SPSS v.26. We evaluated the potential mediational effects of LEOs hiding their feelings on the associations between SJM and marital satisfaction (Figure 1), and between SJM and LEO

burnout (Figure 2). In the model with burnout as the outcome, the indirect effects of LEOs hiding their feelings on LEO burnout was evaluated at different levels of self-reported social support (i.e., moderated mediation). Social support was not hypothesized or tested as a moderator for the model with marital satisfaction as the outcome. Each study model was tested separately by gender, so as not to obscure any potential gender effects. However, models were not compared directly by gender, given the small number of women LEOs in our sample. For each individual model, the following statistical results are reported: variance accounted for in each dependent variable, indirect effects, standardized path coefficients, *p*-values, and 95% confidence intervals. Conditional indirect effects are reported for the moderated mediation model with associated path coefficients, bootstrapped standard errors, and bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals (Hayes, 2015).

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Descriptive Results and Correlations Among Study Variables

Means and standard deviations of the primary test variables and covariates from this study for all LEOs, male LEOs, and female LEOs, respectively, can be found in Table 2. Pearson's correlations of all study variables among all LEOs can be found in Table 3. Pearson's correlations of all study variables among male LEOs and female LEOs, respectively, can be found in Table 4.

Table 2

Descriptive Results

Measure	All LEOs		Male LEOs		Female LEOs		p_{diff}
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	
SJM	2.42	0.89	2.43	0.81	2.28	1.04	.48
LEO Hide	2.52	1.01	2.44	0.93	2.56	1.26	.60
Burnout	1.65	0.54	1.69	0.56	1.58	0.51	.36
Marital Satisfaction	3.67	0.83	3.73	0.79	3.43	0.91	.12
Job Stress	3.84	1.21	3.83	1.25	4.03	1.12	.46
Suppression	4.20	1.33	4.30	1.38	3.90	1.30	.21
Social Support	3.15	0.65	3.17	0.66	3.12	0.64	.77

Note. p_{diff} = significance (two-tailed) of the difference in means for each measure. Male LEOs range from $n = 69$ to $n = 76$, Female LEOs $n = 26$.

Table 3.

Correlation matrix among study variables for all LEOs

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. SJM	–					
2. LEO Hide	.74***	–				
3. Burnout	.46***	.53***	–			
4. Marital Satisfaction	-.50***	-.59***	-.27**	–		
5. Social Support	-.43**	-.58***	-.35***	.52***	–	
6. Job Stress	.41***	.49***	.63***	-.23*	-.36**	–
7. Emotion Suppression	.46***	.52***	.44***	-.23*	-.42***	.32**

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 4.

Correlation matrix among study variables for male LEOs (Lower Triangle) and for female LEOs (Upper Triangle)

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. SJM	—	.82***	.38 [†]	-.66***	-.61***	.41*	.48**
2. LEO Hide	.71***	—	.43*	-.73***	-.57**	.44*	.50**
3. Burnout	.49***	.60***	—	-.22	-.43*	.60**	.33 [†]
4. Marital Satisfaction	-.46***	-.54***	-.31**	—	.54**	-.13	-.35 [†]
5. Social Support	-.37**	-.60***	-.33**	.52***	—	-.48*	-.42*
6. Job Stress	.43***	.53***	.66***	-.25*	-.32**	—	.25
7. Emotion Suppression	.44***	.55***	.47***	-.22	-.43***	.36**	—

Note. [†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Focused Analyses

To investigate whether (H1) the negative association between SJM and marital satisfaction and (H2) the positive association between SJM and officer burnout were (H4) mediated by the extent officers hid their feelings from their spouse, two separate mediation models were used. In each model, the hypothesis regarding the positive association between SJM and the extent officers hid their feelings from their spouse was also tested. In the latter of the two models, conditional indirect effects were (H5)

evaluated at varying levels of social support to investigate any potential moderation of the association between LEOs hiding their feelings and officer burnout.

Bivariate correlations for the variables included in these models can be found in Table 4. The below mediation results are organized by each hypothesized model and for each gender. For each of these four mediation models, a bootstrapping procedure (with 5,000 bias-corrected samples) was employed to calculate the confidence intervals of the indirect and direct effects (see Hayes, 2018).

SJM and its Association with Marital Satisfaction (Hypothesis 1)

The association between SJM and LEO marital satisfaction was tested in the context of the larger mediation model. After controlling for age, trait-like suppression, and overall job stress, analyses showed a significant negative relationship between SJM and marital satisfaction in both male ($c = -.51, p < .001$) and female ($c = -.85, SE = .14, p < .001$) LEOs.

SJM and its Association with Burnout (Hypothesis 2)

After controlling for age, trait-like suppression, and overall job stress, there was a nonsignificant trend towards a positive association between SJM and burnout for male LEOs ($c = .11, p = .098$) and no significant association for female LEOs ($c = .06, p = .54$).

SJM and its Association with LEO Hide (Hypothesis 3)

The association between SJM and LEO Hide was tested in both mediation models. In the mediation model of the relationship between SJM and marital satisfaction, analyses showed a significant positive relationship between SJM and LEO Hide for male ($a = .48, p < .001$) and female ($a = .80, p < .001$) LEOs. In the moderated mediation

model of the relationship between SJM and burnout, analyses showed a significant positive relationship between SJM and LEO Hide for male ($a = .51, p < .001$) and female ($a = .97, p < .001$) LEOs.

LEO Hide Mediating the Association between SJM and Marital Satisfaction in LEOs (Hypothesis 4)

Male LEOs. The first mediation analysis examined whether the extent male LEOs hide their feelings from their spouse mediated the association between the extent male LEOs feel their spouse misunderstands their job and their marital satisfaction levels. This model and its associated path coefficients can be found in Figure 3. After controlling for age, trait-like emotion suppression, and overall job stress, LEO Hide partially mediated the association between SJM and marital satisfaction, with the significance of the indirect effect confirmed by a 95% confidence interval that did not include zero ($ab = -0.27, 95\% \text{ CI} = -0.44, -0.12$). The significance of the direct effect after controlling for LEO Hide as a mediator was also confirmed by a 95% confidence interval that did not include zero ($c' = -0.24, 95\% \text{ CI} = -0.48, -0.01$). Age, trait-like suppression, and job stress were not associated with marital satisfaction in the model.

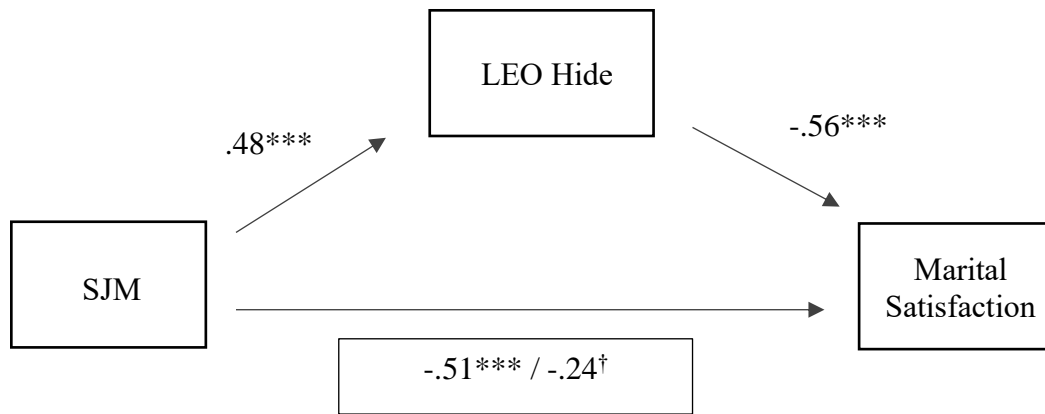


Figure 3. LEO Hide Mediating the Association between SJM and Marital Satisfaction in Male LEOs. $n = 76$, $R^2 = .41$, $F(5, 70) = 9.62$; $†p < .10$. $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$. $***p < .001$.

Female LEOs. The second mediation analysis determined whether the extent female LEOs hide their feelings from their spouse mediated the association between the extent female LEOs feel their spouse misunderstands their job and their marital satisfaction levels. This model and its associated path coefficients can be found in Figure 4. After controlling for age, trait-like emotion suppression, and overall job stress, LEO Hide did not mediate the association between SJM and marital satisfaction, with the lack of significance of the indirect effect confirmed by a 95% confidence interval that included zero ($ab = -0.39$, 95% CI = -0.83, 0.36). The nonsignificance of the direct effect of SJM on marital satisfaction controlling for LEO Hide was also confirmed by a 95% confidence interval that included zero ($c' = -0.47$, 95% CI = -0.90, 0.10). Age, trait-like suppression, and job stress were not associated with marital satisfaction.

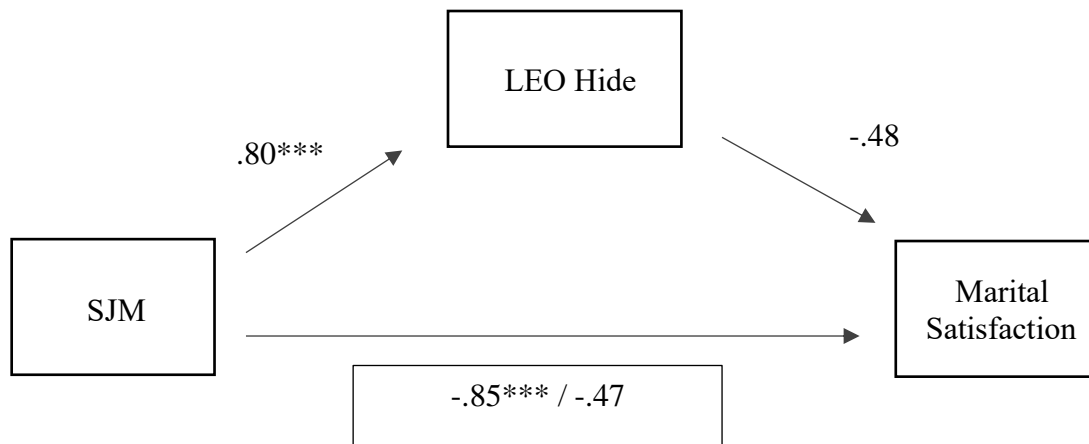


Figure 4. LEO Hide Mediating the Association between SJM and Marital Satisfaction in Female LEOs. $n = 26$, $R^2 = .68$, $F(5, 20) = 8.44$; $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$. $***p < .001$.

LEO Hide Mediating the Association between SJM and Burnout at Varying Levels of Social Support in Male LEOs (Hypotheses 4 and 5)

The first moderated mediation model determined whether the extent male LEOs hide their feelings from their spouse conditionally mediated the association between the extent male LEOs feel their spouse misunderstands their job and their reported feelings of burnout based on their reported levels of social support. This model is represented in Figure 5 with associated path coefficients when applicable. After controlling for age, trait-like emotion suppression, and overall job stress, the interaction of the mediator (LEO Hide) and the moderator, social support, was marginally significant ($p = .07$); examining the hypothesized conditional effects indicated a significant moderation of the indirect effect ($b = .07$, $SE = .06$, 95% CI = .004, .23). The indirect effect of LEO Hide was significant for LEOs with relatively high levels of social support (1 SD above the mean; $a_1b_1 = .16$, $SE = .07$, 95% CI = .04, .32) and at the mean for social support ($a_2b_2 = .11$, $SE = .05$, 95% CI = .02, .22), but not for LEOs with relatively lower levels of social support (1 SD below the mean; $a_3b_3 = .07$, $SE = .07$, 95% CI = -.07, .16). Contrary to the

hypothesized direction of these effects, however, LEOs with average or higher levels of social support showed a stronger positive relationship between hiding feelings from one's spouse and feelings of burnout, whereas LEOs with lower levels of social support showed a weaker relationship between hiding feelings and burnout. Among the covariates in the model, only overall job stress ($b = .14, SE = .05, p < .01$) significantly predicted burnout. The conditional indirect effects of LEO Hide are shown in Figure 6.

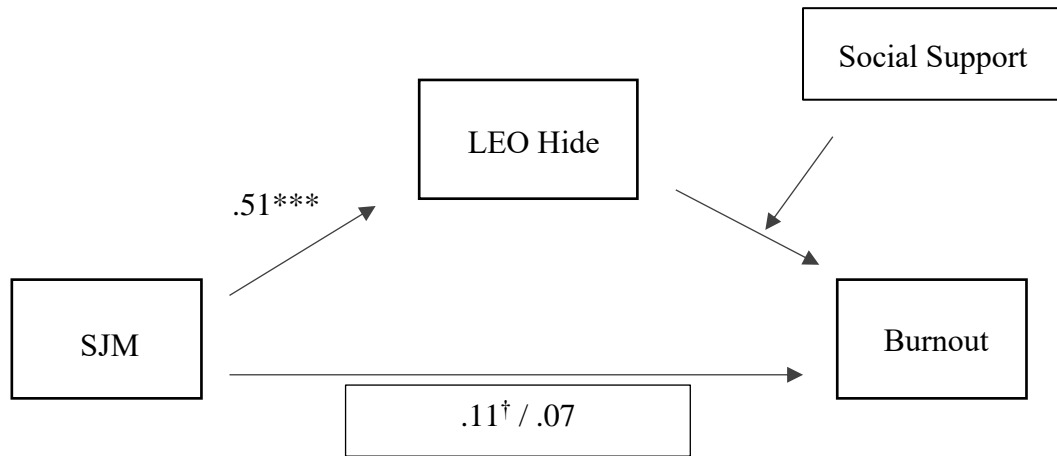


Figure 5. LEO Hide Mediating the Association between SJM and Burnout at Varying Levels of Social Support in Male LEOs. $n = 69, R^2 = .59, F(7, 61) = 12.58; †p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.$

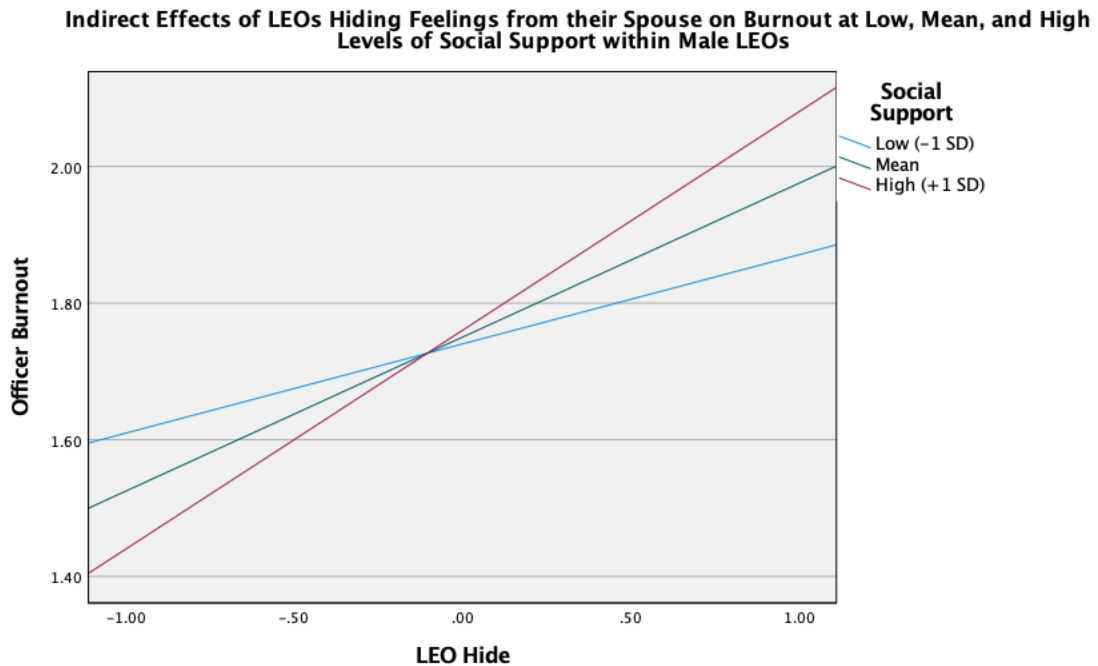


Figure 6. Social Support Moderating the Indirect Effects of LEO Hide on Burnout. The red, green, and blue lines represent LEOs with high (+1 SD), mean, and low (-1 SD) social support, respectively.

LEO Hide Mediating the Association between SJM and Burnout at Varying Levels of Social Support in Female LEOs (Hypotheses 4 and 5).

The second moderated mediation model determined whether the extent female LEOs hide their feelings from their spouse conditionally mediated the association between the extent LEOs feel their spouse misunderstands their job and their reported feelings burnout at varying levels of social support. This model is represented in Figure 7 with associated path coefficients when applicable. After controlling for age, trait-like emotion suppression, and overall job stress, SJM was not associated with burnout, but was significantly positively associated with LEO hide ($b = .97, SE = .77, p < .001$). The covariates in the model, overall job stress ($b = .22, SE = .08, p = .01$) and age ($b = .03, SE$

= .01, $p = .01$) were significant predictors of burnout. No other relationships were significant.

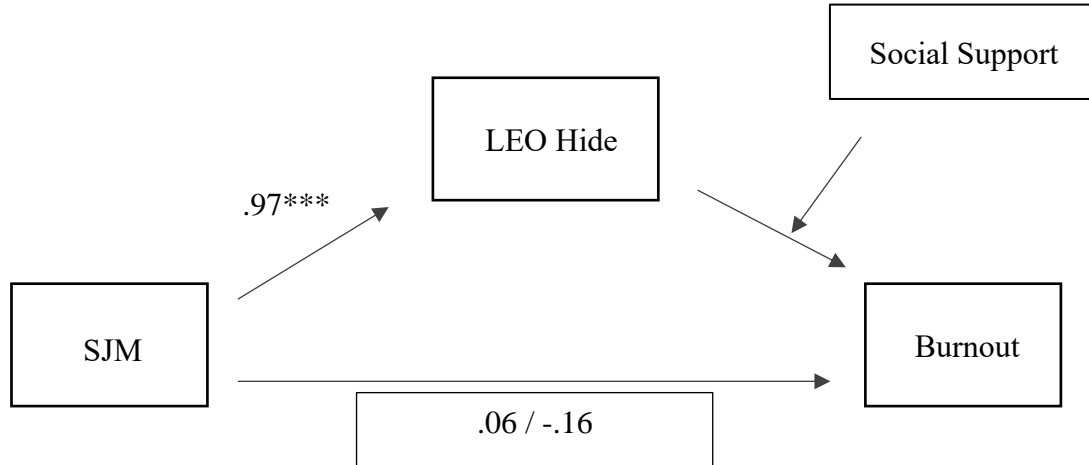


Figure 7. LEO Hide Mediating the Association between SJM and Burnout at Varying Levels of Social Support in Female LEOs. $n = 26$, $R^2 = .59$, $F(7, 18) = 3.73$; $p = .011$. $^{\dagger}p < .10$. $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$. $***p < .001$.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

This study examined whether the extent law enforcement officers felt their spouse misunderstands their job was associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction, higher levels of officer burnout, and greater LEO reports of hiding their feelings from their spouse. This study also examined whether these associations were mediated by the extent LEOs hide their feelings from their spouse. Lastly, this study explored whether each mediation model was consistent for male and female LEOs and whether the association of LEOs hiding their feelings and their reported level of burnout was moderated by their reported levels of social support. The hypothesis that SJM would be negatively associated with marital satisfaction was supported in both male and female LEOs. The hypothesis that SJM would be positively associated with burnout was not supported. The hypothesis that LEOs hiding their feelings would mediate the association between SJM and marital satisfaction was supported for male LEOs. The hypothesis that LEOs hiding their feelings would mediate the association between SJM and burnout was not supported, but conditional indirect effects were observed. Social support moderated the association between LEOs hiding their feelings and burnout; however, this was in the opposite direction from predictions, with hiding feelings showing a stronger relationship with burnout among LEOs with more social support.

SJM, Marital Satisfaction, and Burnout

In line with study hypotheses and prior research regarding job stress in the context of marriage, the presence of a negative relationship between spousal job misunderstanding and marital satisfaction is revealing in multiple ways. The negative

association between these two constructs indicates it may be beneficial for a LEO and their marriage if their spouse understands their job. Officers who want to protect their spouse from their job or who are uncertain about whether their spouse will understand their job, paradoxically, may not share their experiences, contributing to misunderstanding and a desire for such understanding, in turn leading to lower marital satisfaction. Officers who are dissatisfied in their marriages also may perceive their spouses as less understanding of their job. Notably, spouses may or may not actually understand officers' job experience; however, the perception that they do not is associated with marital satisfaction. On the other hand, hypotheses regarding the association between SJM and burnout were not supported. The association was not significant within male or female LEOs.

Indirect Effects of LEOs Hiding their Feelings from their Spouse

SJM and Marital Satisfaction

As mentioned above, if understanding a spouse's job as a LEO is associated with greater marital satisfaction, there may be multiple explanations for why they would be related. Although the effect of female LEOs hiding their feelings on marital satisfaction was not significant, the indirect effect of male LEOs hiding their feelings on marital satisfaction was significant. After controlling for the LEOs' concealed feelings from their spouse, the strength of the relationship between SJM and marital satisfaction decreased and was only marginally significant. As these findings here are from the perspectives of the male LEOs, a significant indirect effect indicates the possibility male officers may have a greater tendency to hide their feelings from their spouse if they feel their spouse misunderstands their job. This tendency to hide their feelings may be a

defense mechanism for their own personal wellbeing to avoid broaching the subject of their negative affect. LEOs may fear not being able to make their spouse understand, which may force them to expend more emotional resources. Regardless of the intentions behind this emotion regulation strategy, its implementation may have negative marital consequences.

SJM, Burnout, and Social Support

Male LEOs. Although it was hypothesized LEO Hide would conditionally mediate the association between SJM and burnout at different levels of social support, where social support would buffer the indirect effects of LEO Hide, the reverse was found. At mean levels and high levels of social support, male LEOs hiding their feelings from their spouse predicted higher levels of burnout. An increase in burnout at higher levels of social support could be explained by the general attitude of social support within the LEO population. If social support, or more specifically, the feeling of needing social support, is viewed as a negative evaluation of the individual, then active emotion suppression may predict more burnout as a result.

On the other hand, as these results are correlational, it is possible those who were at the highest risk for burnout were also the ones who sought and received the most social support. Additionally, at low levels of social support, emotion suppression may not negatively impact burnout as the LEOs cannot report feeling any worse than they already are. Research accounting for the temporality of these constructs may be telling as to the reasons social support was not beneficial as we anticipated.

Female LEOs. Within female LEOs, neither SJM nor hiding feelings from their spouse significantly predicted feelings of burnout. No conditional indirect effects were

found to be significant, indicating relationships in the data did not vary according to their reported level of social support. Nonsignificant findings also may be due to the small sample size, as associations between SJM and marital satisfaction were trending in the same direction for female LEOs as they were for male LEOs. The negative trend between SJM and marital satisfaction in female LEOs offers potential for these relationships to be borne out in larger samples. As stated previously, research has found some evidence of gender differences in emotion regulation, such that women are more flexible in their choice of emotion regulation strategy and have a larger repertoire of strategies (Goubet & Chrysikou, 2019). Men are also more likely to employ emotion-suppressive strategies compared to women (Barrett et al., 1998). Gross and John (2003) also found in their analyses using the ERQ that men scored higher in emotion suppression scales than women. However, gender differences in ERQ suppression scores in the present sample were not found. It is possible that women who choose to enter law enforcement and/or who are immersed in law enforcement culture are more similar to men than in a general population. Gender implications are discussed further below.

Why LEO Emotion Regulation may Contribute to Marital Satisfaction

An important aspect of any relationship is the ability to effectively communicate. A LEO may struggle to communicate with their spouse regarding the specific complexities of their job, but there may be a more impactful communication barrier that is associated with their marital satisfaction. There is evidence that communicating your emotions is healthy within relationships (Askari et al., 2012; Ledermann et al., 2010), and although a LEO may attribute marital dissatisfaction to their spouse not understanding them or their job, this may be enacted in the relationship with respect to the LEO's

emotional response to their spouse misunderstanding. Although a causal relationship between SJM, LEO Hide, and marital satisfaction cannot be established with the present data, statistical relationships between these constructs point to the possibility that LEOs may hide their feelings because they feel their spouse would not understand.

If an officer feels their spouse would misunderstand aspects of their job, they may be less inclined to share that information with them. In order to avoid specific instances where their emotions are pulled into the spotlight and questioned by their spouse, a LEO may actively suppress their emotions to avoid having to talk about the causes and avoid those negative feelings (Berking et al., 2010). LEOs may be hiding negative feelings from their spouse – including pretending to feel more energetic or interested than they actually are – as a way to “protect” themselves, their spouses, or their marriages.

Although intentions to protect their spouses or their marriages are valid motivations for context-specific emotion suppression, shielding their own emotions may backfire, reducing the potential benefits that come from a satisfying spousal relationship (Roberts et al., 2013).

Why Increased Levels of Social Support may Add Strain to the Emotional Load in a LEO’s Life

It was hypothesized higher levels of social support would buffer any relationship between LEOs hiding their feelings and burnout, but the opposite was found. Male LEOs with more received social support had a stronger association between their emotion suppression practices within the context of their marriage and their reported levels of burnout. Although these findings are contrary to study hypotheses, there may be an explanation as to why these results were borne out in our data.

Emotional dissonance, the difference in emotions displayed versus emotions actually felt, is a necessary consideration when analyzing the emotion regulation tendencies in a LEO in relation to their burnout. Reflecting on research by Bakker and Heuven (2006), emotional dissonance accounted for much of the burnout experienced by nurses and police officers. Similar relationships are seen in this study as LEOs hiding their feelings was associated with burnout, and this relationship was exacerbated by social support. When considering that emotional dissonance stems from emotional expectations of a LEO from various people in their life, it is possible that a larger, more supportive social network would increase the overall emotional expectations for the LEO. If LEOs have a larger social network and they feel they have to conceal their feelings to protect those they care about, they may experience more frequent emotional dissonance.

Another potential explanation for the counterintuitive moderation due to social support could be found in relation to research conducted by Indregard and colleagues (2018) on the association between emotional demands and burnout and how it was moderated by self-efficacy. The researchers established a conditional effect of self-efficacy where workers with lower self-efficacy saw an increased effect of emotional demands on burnout. Self-efficacy is the extent an individual feels they are capable of coping with difficult situations. Research on self-efficacy and social support has also found interaction effects where social support buffers negative outcomes of burnout due to emotional demands for individuals with high self-efficacy, but the reverse effect is found where the relationship is exacerbated for individuals with low self-efficacy (Goussinsky 2019; Stetz et al., 2006).

Past research (Adams et al., 2004; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) also highlights the individual scripts different cultures possess in influencing how social support seeking is related to competence and wellbeing. This situational variation in support-seeking assessments (viewing seeking support as positive versus negative) may be relevant when considering law enforcement culture. Within law enforcement, there is a stigma associated with seeking support, particularly for mental health issues (Jetelina et al., 2020; Karaffa & Koch, 2016). A double-edged sword presents itself where the stigma associated with support-seeking may dissuade them from doing so in the first place, and if they do not receive the support they need, they may continue to struggle with their emotion regulation and feelings of burnout. The implications of self-efficacy and social support in law enforcement are discussed below.

Limitations

The results presented need to be interpreted in light of several methodological limitations. First, there are a number of potential issues regarding the sample for this study. Statistical analyses may have been under-powered for these particular mediation models, one of which included a moderator. For example, the two mediation analyses conducted solely with female participants contained data from only 26 female officers. Male participants consisted of 69 and 76 officers, respectively, in the two models, which is still a small sample for a moderated mediation analysis with three covariates. In addition to the small sample size, the demographics for the study participants indicate a mostly homogenous gender and racial makeup. About 86.5% of study participants identified as European American and 73% identified as male; although men make up 87% of all officers, close to three times as many male LEOs participated in the study as

female LEOs. A gap in the literature remains concerning female LEOs that can only be filled through research directed toward them in particular. The small sample size and lack of diversity in this study specifically limit generalizability to the law enforcement population as a whole.

Two of the measures we used, the measure of the extent LEOs hide their feelings from their spouse and the extent LEOs feel their spouse misunderstands their job, were developed specifically for this study. They have not been psychometrically validated for use in other studies and require more research to determine construct validity.

Next, this data was collected via survey and is cross-sectional and correlational. Conclusions about the potential directional relationships are predominately theory-driven and it is not possible to determine that there were causal effects on the dependent variables due to study independent variables. A future longitudinal design may be beneficial for identifying potential directions for causality.

Lastly, these data are reported strictly from the LEO perspective. Although LEO evaluations of their own affect and marital satisfaction are important, LEO spousal data was not collected. The interpretations postulated concerning LEO spouses are purely hypothetical and cannot be used to make conclusions about the spouses, themselves; they only speak to LEOs' perceptions of their spouses.

Implications

Results from this study may lead to potential opportunities for interventions in order to improve emotion regulation tendencies in LEOs, thus potentially decreasing LEO burnout and improving marital satisfaction. By extension, we may be able to effectively increase job performance through relationship-centered interventions. The

specific emotion regulation strategies employed by LEOs tie directly into the ways in which they interact with their spouse and the amount of burnout they experience.

If LEOs are able to process their feelings in a more effective manner, it is possible we could mitigate feelings of burnout. A potential avenue for improving LEO emotion regulatory tendencies could be to employ the help of the LEO's spouse. Taking into consideration the potential burnout associated with officers hiding their feelings from their spouse, if the LEO is able to more effectively convey their feelings to their spouse, it stands to reason they may report lower levels of burnout. This, in turn, could improve their job performance as emotional exhaustion is a strong predictor of job performance (Bakker & Heuven, 2006; Karatepe, 2013).

Another avenue for mitigating burnout could be found in emotion regulation training designed for LEOs. In 2010, Berking and colleagues conducted a study analyzing LEO emotion regulation strategies. The LEOs perceived specific techniques for emotion regulation as threatening and tended to avoid situations that could cue negative emotions. The training was specifically designed to increase focus on positive emotions and was found to be effective in improving LEO skills in emotion regulation, eliminating disparities found compared to the general public. Increased positive emotion and decreased negative emotion was also seen to predict higher levels of resilience, which negatively predicts burnout (Galatzer-Levy, 2013; McCain et al., 2017). These studies highlight the role emotion regulation might have in improving LEO individual wellbeing.

In evaluating sources of officer burnout and potential aftermaths due to poor job performance, social implications are also considered. In 2020, law enforcement was at

the forefront of discussions about racial justice (DeSilver, 2020). After involvement of LEOs in numerous killings of unarmed racial minorities, the conversation shifted from blaming a few bad apples (individual LEOs), to also laying blame on the overarching group of law enforcement in the US (Cunningham, 2020). The idea of systemic racism within the LEO establishment forces us to take a more holistic approach to answer how we can potentially mitigate some of the issues brought on by systemic racism.

This research does not seek to propose links between burnout and systemic racism, but previous research makes multiple claims about how LEO burnout and emotions factor into interactions between the police and the general public. Research from Mastracci and Adams (2020) found surface acting (which is part of “emotion labor” and requires displaying emotions one does not feel, as assessed in our LEO Hide measure) to be a significant, positive correlate with use-of-force, and research from Guy et al. (2008) shows surface acting is a significant predictor of burnout. Mastracci and Adams further explain that surface acting serves as a mechanism to facilitate emotion regulation when needed to comply with organizational norms. This construct stems from literature on emotional labor, and in the context of LEO, is exemplified in their efforts to appear calm and neutral while on-duty (Pogrebin & Poole, 1991). Additionally, Queiros and colleagues (2013) found burnout was a significant predictor of aggressiveness in LEOs. Therefore, there are implications of emotion regulation in the context of burnout in terms of the potential for increased use of force. These associations point to the need for future research on burnout and to determine if improved emotion regulation in law enforcement could potentially mitigate some of the threat of use-of-force.

Individual LEO emotion regulation has both personal and social implications. The current literature highlights the harmful stigma associated with mental health and potentially social support in law enforcement, but organizational changes to support individual LEOs may prove to be beneficial for job performance and individual affect. The idea of support in the life of a LEO is contextual, which may highlight how different kinds of support are evaluated differently by LEOs. Research has shown lower perceived organizational support predicted increases in counterproductive work behavior as well as poorer in-role performance (Bakker & Heuven, 2006; Shoss et al., 2013). When considering these findings with the prevalence of social support stigma, as well as findings from Goussinsky (2019) and Stetz et al. (2006), the interaction between social support and self-efficacy on burnout may also predict job performance. If LEOs' perceptions of stigma surrounding support (particularly emotional support) prevent them from accepting social support, then they are less likely to benefit from it. An increase in social support may induce feelings of inadequacy, which would be reflected in low self-efficacy.

Social support is also relevant when considering the links between stress and personal, negative health outcomes such as cardiovascular disease (Dimsdale, 2008) and decreased immune functioning (Dhabhar, 2014). Additionally, a decreased strength of social relationships is as strong a predictor of mortality as smoking and alcohol use (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010). These findings indicate if a LEO views social support negatively, they may be less likely to employ their social network for help, thus increasing their risk for personal health issues. The culture around the social support in law enforcement shows the systemic shortcomings related to both physical and mental health.

Future Research

Research on these constructs in the context of law enforcement should be conducted in pursuit of determining areas where emotion regulation training interventions may prove effective. Focus should also be directed to expanding participant pools to police departments in other geographical areas to increase the generalizability of study findings.

Improving LEO emotion regulation within the context of a relationship does not discount the potential, necessary applications of emotion regulation on the job. Emotion regulation may prove useful and necessary to maintain control in dangerous situations and also may be beneficial depending on the emotional expectations from their spouse. In finding the appropriate balance where LEOs feel they are able to share with their spouse but can still perform their job, the effects of emotional dissonance stemming from their job could be mitigated which may have compounding benefits for society.

Future studies should consider the potential avenues for ameliorating burnout in both an individual and interpersonal, emotional context. Specific interventions may be designed through researching social support and self-efficacy in the context of law enforcement, increases in positive affect as a way to buffer the harmful effects of ineffective emotion regulation, and training LEOs to effectively communicate and regulate their emotions, among others. Coordination on these efforts with mental health professionals and law enforcement administrations may help in combatting burnout and mitigating the associated societal risks of improper policing.

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APPENDIX A

LEO SPOUSAL JOB MISUNDERSTANDING SCALE

Table 5

LEO Spousal Job Misunderstanding Scale

How frequently do you experience the following? (1=Never, 2=Once in a while, 3=Some of the time, 4=Most of the time, 5=All of the time):
1. I feel my spouse/partner does not understand my job duties.
2. I feel my spouse/partner does not understand how I feel about my job.
3. I feel my spouse/partner does not understand my level of stress.
4. I wish my spouse/partner could experience what my job is like.
5. I wish my spouse/partner could experience my level of stress
6. I wish I could talk to my spouse/partner more about my job.
7. I wish I could talk to my spouse/partner more about my job stress.
8. I want to be alone to wind down at the end of my shift
9. I wish I could talk to my spouse/partner about my feelings
10. I tell stories about work that I think are funny or exciting, but my spouse/partner thinks they're dangerous or disgusting

APPENDIX B

LEO HIDING FEELINGS QUESTIONNAIRE

Table 6

LEO Hiding Feelings Questionnaire

When you are with your spouse/partner, how often do you find yourself having to (1=Never, 2=Once in a while, 3=Some of the time, 4=Most of the time, 5=All of the time):
1. Hide your feelings about work
2. Hide your emotions
3. Pretend to feel happier than you really feel
4. Pretend to feel interested in conversation
5. Pretend to have more energy than you really have

APPENDIX B

IRB EXEMPTION FOR HUMAN SUBJECT TESTING



EXEMPTION GRANTED

[Nicole Roberts](#)
[NCIAS: Social and Behavioral Sciences, School of \(SSBS\)](#)
602/543-3911
Nicole.A.Roberts@asu.edu

Dear [Nicole Roberts](#):

On 10/12/2020 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Modification / Update
Title:	Work and Family Life in Police Officers
Investigator:	Nicole Roberts
IRB ID:	1105006470
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	None

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 10/12/2020.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Mary Burleson