

Inside Insight, Opportunities for Meaning, Empathy and the Obstacles of Stress: An  
Exploratory Study and Pilot Training Among Juvenile Justice Officers.

By

Eve Venus Ekman

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Committee in charge:

Co-Chair Professor Susan I. Stone, School of Social Welfare

Co-Chair Professor Jodi Halpern, School of Public Health

Professor Christina Maslach, Department of Psychology

Professor Neil Gilbert, School of Social Welfare

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## Abstract

Inside Insight, Opportunities for Meaning, Empathy and the Obstacles of Stress: An Exploratory Study and Pilot Training Among Juvenile Justice Officers.

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Doctor of Philosophy in Social Welfare

University of California, Berkeley

Professors Susan I. Stone and Jodi Halpern Co-Chairs

Prior research indicates that human service care providers experience especially high levels of chronic workplace stress and burnout compared to workers in other professions. Chronic workplace stress is linked to a variety of poor physical and mental health outcomes. There has been significantly more research to assess and support human service care providers in education, social welfare, and health care than providers working in law enforcement such as the population considered in this case study: juvenile justice officers, JJOs. In particular, there has been little prior research on juvenile justice officers (JJOs), who have the difficult job of working closely with incarcerated youth populations.

The intended contributions of this study are: (1) developing a descriptive baseline understanding of stress among an important and understudied population of human service care providers, (2) exploring human service care provider workplace stress through a new lens of empathy and meaning and (3) piloting a training to reduce stress with a focus on facilitating empathy and meaning. This research is carried out over three phases.

The promising insights from the case study and pilot analysis include strategies to support JJOs finding meaning in their workplace. These strategies are achieved through creating opportunities for building relationships and empathy with youth and coworkers, improving the system for communication and positive feedback with management and teaching emotion regulation, mindfulness and empathic communication to improve individual coping skills.

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“Only the development of compassion and understanding for others can bring us the tranquility and happiness we all seek.”

Dalai Lama XIV

“Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose.”

Viktor E. Frankl

I have achieved this goal of a doctorate degree upon the shoulders of giants: the academic legacies of philosophers, researchers and humanists before me, my academic mentors and the unfaltering support and love of my parents who modeled a life’s work in pursuit of social justice.

Life experience has been the greatest teacher of all. I thank all of my patients, clients and coworkers who shared with me their suffering and allowed me to learn from their strength. The completion of this document and degree will allow me to fulfill my most meaningful intentions to the world: to be of service and make the world a better place than I found it.

Thank you.



## INTRODUCTION

### **Juvenile Justice Officers, Emotional Labor, Empathy, and Meaning**

There is an implicit and largely untested assumption that human service care providers self-select into their profession because of an altruistic motivation: They seek the rewards associated with empathic connection, and a sense of meaning (Batson, Lishner, Cook, & Sawyer, 1991; Keltner, 2009; Morrison, Burke, & Greene, 2007). Despite the organizational and client-based demands that arise in human service work, there is also a great opportunity to cultivate feelings of meaning from the empathic connection to clients (Halifax, 2011). For example, doctors working in palliative care settings, in which there are high volumes of human suffering and death, often report high levels of satisfaction and personal accomplishment (Graham, Ramirez, Cull, Finlay, Hoy, & Richards, 1996; Halifax, 2011). Such personal accomplishment is often derived from the provider's ability to manage emotionally meaningful relationships with clients and coworkers (Graham et al., 1996; Morrison et al., 2007). This can make the human service setting an ideal location to connect to core motivations and values of helping others (Brickman, 1987; Porter, Steers, & Boulian, 1973).

Human service care providers engage in job roles and tasks where the delivery of a service is part of the treatment itself (Hochschild, 1983; Yagil, 2008). The successful delivery of the treatment (e.g., providing medication, education, or rehabilitation services) is intrinsically bound up with the quality of the interpersonal interaction (Hochschild, 1983; Riess, Kelley, Bailey, Dunn, & Phillips, 2012). The job role expectation for this performance of interpersonal care and support for clients, irrespective of whether it matches what is actually felt, is known as emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983).

In contrast, the authentic feelings of empathy felt by providers can elicit emotional resonance with the suffering or struggle of the client. This resonance can lead to sympathetic distress (Decety, 2011). This sympathetic distress has been a concern among professionals in medical settings, who are taught to detach from authentic concern for their patients in order to avoid this (Halpern, 2001). However, authentic empathy can also facilitate feelings of connection, which are emotionally rewarding, meaningful, and deeply satisfying (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; Halpern, 2001).

Unfortunately, in human service settings where authentic empathy and emotional connections could create meaning for workers, the burdens of workplace stress (including, but not limited to, sympathetic distress) can eclipse the altruistic motivation and desire for connection. Supporting the personal efficacy of providers so that they can manage their stress is a critical component to finding and maintaining meaning and well-being (Poulin, Brown, Dillard & Smith 2013). Over the course of three phases, this study will identify specific types of stress that may present obstacles to connecting with meaning in the human service setting, in order to develop, deliver, and evaluate a pilot training to teach skills for mitigating these obstacles.

A robust body of research indicates that human service care providers experience higher levels of chronic workplace stress and burnout compared to workers in other professions (American Psychological Association, 2009; Hochschild, 1983; Zammuner, Lotto, & Galli, 2003). Chronic workplace stress is linked to a variety of poor health and psychosocial outcomes, including accelerated aging (Epel, et al., 2004), coronary heart disease and high blood pressure (Dickerson & Kemeny, 2004), mental health distress (Lazarus, 1966), and job burnout (Jackson & Maslach, 1982; Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009).

It is important to note that despite the well-researched prevalence of workplace stress across a variety of human service settings, there is minimal research on the opportunities for empathy, and meaning (Edwards, Burnard, Coyle, Fothergill, & Hannigan, 2000). Research concerning human service care provider empathy and meaning has been centered in hospital settings (Morrison et al., 2007; Decety, Yang, & Chen, 2010; Riess et al., 2012).

The current study presents a single case study of Juvenile justice officers in a county facility to further explore sources of stress, empathy, and meaning. Despite key roles they may potentially play in the rehabilitation of these youth (Abrams, 2006; Krisberg, 2005), these human service care providers have largely been understudied. The current case study of JJOs has the following intended contributions: (1) develop a descriptive baseline understanding of stress among an important and understudied population of human service care providers, (2) explore human service care provider workplace stress through a new lens of empathy and meaning, and (3) pilot a training to reduce stress, with a focus on facilitating empathy and meaning.

### **The Great Unknown: Juvenile Justice Officers**

Workplace stress in the criminal justice setting (in both adult and juvenile jails) has not been researched as thoroughly as workplace stress in other human service settings (Keinan & Malach-Pines, 2007; Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000; Poole & Regoli, 1980)—and empathy and meaning in criminal justice settings has barely been studied at all. The limited extant research on this group of workers reveals rates of chronic workplace stress and burnout that surpass stress experienced in other human service settings (Dowden & Tellier, 2004; Keinan & Malach-Pines, 2007; United States Department of Justice [USDOJ], 2000). Compared to adult corrections and probation officers, even less is known about frontline Juvenile justice officers (JJOs) (Lopez & Russell, 2008; National Institute of Justice [NIJ], 2005; Steiner, Roberts, & Hemmens, 2003).

These workers have direct and intensive contact with a very vulnerable subgroup of youth (Abrams, 2006). The majority of youth who are held inside the Juvenile Justice System have already been involved in other systems, such as foster care and mental health facilities, and are disproportionately youth of color and low socioeconomic status. Many of them also have mental health issues and educational problems as well (Abrams, 2006; Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Division of Juvenile Justice [DCRDJJ], 2013).

### **Prior Research in the Juvenile Justice System: Compassion Confined**

Given the central role of the Juvenile Justice Officer in the lives of incarcerated youth, it is surprising that very little prior research has considered the experiences and work of Juvenile justice officers. The most significant research on

JJOs emerged from a qualitative research study by social work researcher Laura Abrams, she focusing not on JJOs but on the youth inside juvenile justice settings (Abrams, 2006; Abrams & Anderson-Nathe, 2012). Abrams's research suggests that rehabilitation is best facilitated when youth perceive JJOs as present and invested, acting in "proxy parental" roles (Abrams, 2006; Abrams & Anderson-Nathe, 2013). In short, Abrams's work sheds an important light on youth experience of relationships with JJOs. A key next step is to understand the challenges and rewards of this relational job role from the perspective of the JJOs (Marsh et al., 2010).

### **History of the Juvenile Justice System**

To understand the specific types of stress experienced by this population of human service care providers, it is useful to put the Juvenile Justice System in perspective, and consider it in the context of social and political factors. There have been ongoing shifts in official objectives of the Juvenile Justice System (JJS) that cause the role of Juvenile justice officers to shift from rehabilitation to discipline and law enforcement (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Krisberg, 2005).

The JJS was created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century for children of low socioeconomic status who were drawn to juvenile crime due to factors such as poor parental supervision, familial alcoholism, and domestic violence (Steiner et al., 2003). Prior to the development of a juvenile system, young offenders were brought to adult courts and locked up with adult offenders (Krisberg, 2005; Steiner, et al., 2003). The Juvenile Justice System was created to provide early interventions to rehabilitate youth from unstable psychosocial influences at home, instead of exposing them to the negative influence of more experienced adult criminals through joint confinement (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995).

A significant rise in violent juvenile crime and arrests from 1984 to 1994 raised public concern and ushered in new national policies to influence the JJS to operate more like the punitive adult system (Steiner et al., 2003). This "Get-Tough" era shifted the objective of the system from "the best interests of the child" to "the best interests of society." These shifting political objectives necessarily shifted the roles and expectations of Juvenile justice officers. JJOs went from working in a job where the expectations were to provide rehabilitation, to a job where the primary expectations were to provide discipline with a more punitive approach (Mears, Shollenberger, Willison, Owens, & Butts, 2010; Steiner et al., 2003).

### **Rehabilitative Treatment and Conflicting JJO Job Role**

Juvenile justice officers (JJOs) have dual—and occasionally conflicting—job role expectations that mirror the shifting goals and approaches of the larger Juvenile Justice System (Mears, et al., 2010). Most fundamentally, they are responsible for providing both rehabilitation and discipline for incarcerated youth (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Curtis, Reese, & Cone, 1990; Steiner et al., 2003). Complicated and conflicting job roles contribute to further workplace stress (Glazer & Beehr, 2005; Poole & Regoli, 1980).

In fact, adult and juvenile probation officers have legally defined roles that are divided between disciplinarian (law enforcement) and rehabilitator (e.g., case worker or resource broker) (Curtis et al., 1990). The disciplinarian role is defined by concrete tasks that can be monitored, such as performing jail cell checks and writing daily incident reports (Mears et al., 2010; Steiner et al., 2003).

Dual job role expectations are also reflected in *The Desktop Guide to Juvenile Justice and Probation*, which was first published in 1993, and revised in 2002. The 1993 guide describes a balanced role that equally combines the duties of rehabilitation and law enforcement. However, the 2002 guide emphasizes disciplinary outcomes, performance of custody tasks (such as jail cell checks and daily incident reports, as listed above), and an objective of community protection (Steiner et al., 2003). Thus, JJOs' important rehabilitation-related tasks appear to have become less clear and more marginalized over time (Lopez & Russell, 2008; Curtis, et al., 1990).

While the elements of rehabilitative treatment are difficult to quantify, the treatment is fundamentally based on building positive relationships and includes role modeling, one-on-one counseling, and overall empathic engagement (Curtis, et al., 1990). In addition, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Dependency Prevention emphasizes the importance of training JJOs so that they can effectively:

“change juvenile offenders’ behavior by providing them with opportunities to experience positive relationships with healthy adults in appropriate settings”  
(Roush & McMillen, 2000, p. 2)

Yet training to provide rehabilitation is not nationally mandated, and each county juvenile justice setting may have a different understanding of the principal role of juvenile justice officers. Some counties may prioritize rehabilitation and empathic engagement with youth, and other counties may focus on training in safety and discipline (Krisberg, 2005).

These conflicting role expectations and lack of support raise concerns, given that frontline JJOs work intensively with youth. They work in shifts to monitor locked units 24 hours a day, seven days a week (Keinan & Malach-Pines, 2007; NIJ, 2005; Steiner et al., 2003). In many cases, JJOs spend more time with incarcerated youth than probation officers, teachers, mental health counselors, and judges (Marsh, Evans, & Williams, 2010; Krisberg, 2005).

Today, California's JJS is a network of family courts, public and private youth and family service agencies, and community juvenile detention centers. Various agencies collaborate to provide rehabilitation and treatment for youth before, during, and after incarceration. When rehabilitation is successful, it leads to decreased recidivism (Krisberg, 2005). Role modeling and positive relationship building have been linked to successful outcomes such as reduced rates of recidivism (Krisberg, Vong, Hartney & Marchionna, 2010). Conversely, incarceration with a punitive rather than rehabilitative approach has not reduced recidivism, and in some cases has been found to increase recidivism (Krisberg, 2005).

### **Current Case Study**

The primary topics of interest (empathy and meaning) and population (Juvenile justice officers) in this study are not well understood in the current research literature. To better understand these topics, the dissertation employs a case study approach that unfolds over three phases.

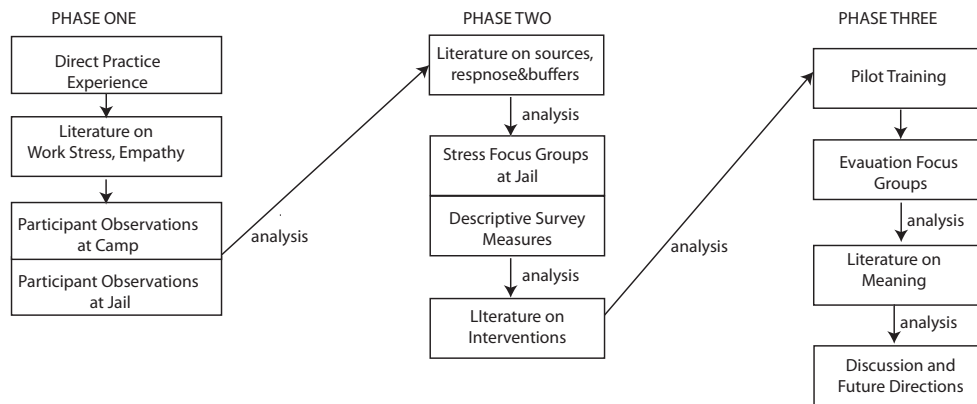


Figure 1. Phases of Study

As seen in the figure above, phase one of the study began with the direct practice experience of this researcher's work as a human service care provider. Working in health and child welfare settings, I observed a variety of expressions of stress, empathy, and feelings of meaning amid challenging, sympathetically distressing work settings. Literature on workplace stress and empathy were reviewed prior to approaching a research setting. This preliminary direct practice experience and literature drove the research question of how empathy and stress manifest among human service care providers.

Chapter One covers phase one, beginning with participant observations of the everyday work at two different juvenile detention facilities, the Hillcrest Jail and the Glenwood Boys Camp. Analyses of these data led to the first inquiry about differences in how organizationally structured job role expectations facilitate or inhibit JJOs' experience of meaning.

Chapter Two, on methods, describes the case study approach and the study rationale, as well as the qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures.

Chapter Three covers phase two, including focus groups, surveys, and additional review of related literature. The focus groups were analyzed for emergent descriptions of empathy, meaning and workplace stress and stressors. This qualitative approach was complemented by descriptive survey measures to capture empathy, burnout, and professional quality of life. This data set was framed by, and then compared to, a literature review on stressors, stress and responses to stress. The analysis of phase two data in Chapter Three provided important insights for targeting a stress-reduction pilot training.

Chapter Four begins with literature on stress reduction interventions to build the curriculum for a pilot training. Phase three includes the design, delivery, and evaluation of this pilot training, which is aimed at developing and reconnecting to empathy and meaning by building skills to identify and address stressors and stress. The evaluation of the pilot training assessed the basic feasibility through online surveys and focus groups with training participants.

The analysis of this data lead to further reading on meaning in work, and to concluding points about improving the overall JJO workplace and topics for further study covered in Chapter Five.

Thus, the present study uses a case example of Juvenile justice officers to examine, in more depth, sources of stress and opportunities for empathy and meaning. The findings from these data were coupled with current intervention research to develop, implement, and assess the acceptability and feasibility of a 16-hour pilot intervention intended to help Juvenile Jail Officers in a Northern Californian County facility manage workplace stress and reconnect to core motivations that lead to meaning.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE CONTEXT OF STRESS, EMPATHY, AND MEANING

### Overview

Although available estimates suggest that chronic stress and burnout are quite prevalent among adult and juvenile correctional officers (Lopez & Russell, 2008; NIJ, 2005), almost nothing is known about the experience of empathy, relationships, and meaning among these workers. Research on these human service care providers has focused on organizational stressors such as unhealthy working conditions, understaffing, and violence among inmates (NIJ, 2005). The limited research on the influence of relationships between Juvenile justice officers and inmates on the workers' experience of stress has shown that quality relationships with inmates create a buffering effect against stress (Gerstein et al., 1987) and are related to JJOs' attitudes on their support of treatment versus punishment (Lambert, Hogan, Altheimer, Jiang & Stevenson, 2010). Research on human service care providers outside of the correctional setting has further suggested that relationships with clients can foster feelings of purpose and meaning in the job (Morrison et al., 2007). These findings suggest a need to further explore and understand the context of stress and the potential role of empathy and finding meaning in work among Juvenile justice officers.

Thus, the goals of this chapter are to review literature and provide analysis of baseline observations. The first is to consider observations of work stress, empathy, and experiences of meaning in work among JJOs in two different facilities in the same county. These observations raise questions that lead to the second goal: a review of literature on the underlying mechanisms of stress, empathy, and meaning. Specifically, this review considers several strands of psychological and psychophysiological, sociological, and neuroscience literature. The first strand considers the role of empathy, and its ability to help providers work effectively with clients as well as its ability to serve as a potential gateway for providers to experience meaning in work. The second strand addresses the emotional demands of human service work and, in particular, the concepts of emotional labor and emotional resonance leading to sympathetic distress (Glazer & Beehr, 2005; Hayward & Tuckey, 2011; Hochschild, 1983). This line of research suggests that sympathetic distress may be salient for JJOs. The effective balance between this labor and sympathetic distress will be explored through the psychophysiology research on emotion regulation strategies (Gross, 2002; Gross & John 2003), some of which occur automatically and others which can be intentionally developed (Haller, Lipsitt, Yao, & Larson, 2005; Zammuner et al., 2003). A final strand of research considers how individual appraisal of the work environment and efficacy may be potential buffers against stress (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007; De Valk & Oostrom, 2007; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

### A Tale of Two Jails

The observations in this phase of the study consider and contrast JJOs' working in two different facilities in the same job roles with incarcerated youth who share a similar demographic background. The Hillcrest Jail, (the jail), is a restrictive environment with an emphasis on discipline and where there are minimal

opportunities for JJOs to have interpersonal interaction with incarcerated youth. The Glenwood Boys Camp, (the camp), is a less restrictive and more rehabilitation-oriented environment requiring the JJOs have a high level of interpersonal interaction with the youth. These two environments provide an interesting contrast in the expectations for JJOs dictated by the work environments. Although the environments are different, interviews revealed a shared motivation among both groups of JJOs: to help troubled youth, to be role models, to give back to the community. As one JJO participant from the camp described in his own words: “We have the ultimate gift of pleasure of being able to help kids and help them help themselves.”

### **Camp: Common Purpose, Cooperation, and Cohesion**

My observations of one JJO was particularly provocative, this JJO, JJO#5, transferred to the Glenwood Boys Camp after 20 years working in the Hillcrest Jail. I initially met JJO#5 when he showed me around the jail and then six months later after his transfer to the camp. When I then visited camp, I did not recognize him. At Hillcrest Jail, I had noticed his slumped posture, downward gaze, dark circles under his eyes, and a quiet demeanor. At camp, his whole body was opened up, he moved around with ease, good eye contact, and was eager to tell me about how he felt different in his new surroundings. He felt much less stress at the camp even though his role was essentially the same, he was a higher level of JJO, responsible for overseeing staff. At the Hillcrest Jail, he felt that his staff was unmotivated and that he had to constantly “keep on top” of staff to make sure they were doing their jobs. At the Glenwood Boys Camp, the staff were more self-motivated not only to work with the kids but also to lighten the load for their coworkers. JJO#5 also stated that being able to spend more time with the youth at camp made him feel he could help the youth more than in the jail

JJO #5: After some 20 some odd years at the jail, I've just been here [the camp] for a little less than a year and having the sense of the cohesion-ness of the group as a whole, having a common purpose to help these young men, whereas at the jail, you're just managing. A lot of times, you're not even getting assistance from management to help with that managing. You know, there's a lot of stuff going, but here, at camp, it's really you're getting a very biased view. It's just very much a—I don't know how to describe it. It's just the sense of a common purpose.

Researcher: And is that trained to you guys? Or is that because of the environment you're working in?

JJO #5: The environment. Every time I come back here [the jail], they say, "God, you look happier." I don't know. I don't know if it's true or not. I think they just say it just to say because having been here. Yeah, right. I think they say that to anybody that goes to camp. But I am happier.

Other camp staff, and even former camp staff now working in the jail, echoed such experiences. They reported cooperation and communication that supported a common purpose: helping the youth. The camp staff described motivation and



meaning from interactions with youth and cooperation with coworkers. They also felt effective at doing their job, particularly helping the youth.

We're in that environment every single day. So we get to be intoxicated. We have a purpose. We know when we've got to take a kid to the DMV. We've got to take a kid to a job interview. So there's always something. (Camp JJO #2)

I think the major big difference between jail and camp is that we want our kids at camp to be kids, and we kind of try to instill that type of culture. As staff members, I think we're all on the same page as far as that goes. And the difference is that these kids [in jail] don't really get to interact unless they come out and that's when stuff jumps off. You know, dramatic kids they're locked up all the time [in jail] so they're like, you know, little dogs that come out and don't know each other and fight. (Camp JJO #1)

At the Glenwood Boys Camp, there are no metal detectors or security checks to enter the main buildings. There are no locked doors in the entire camp: not in any of the bunks, classrooms, or activity spaces. The camp serves 60 youth, half the amount of the jail. The camp is in the mountains between Half Moon Bay and the city of San Mateo.

### **Jail: Locked Doors, Communication Deprivation, and Cynicism**

The jail is in a central urban area. Inside the jail are a court, a school, and a medical facility. There are a total of 180 beds available inside the six identical locked units of 30. The facility has the appearance of a modern adult jail; it is clean and feels very institutional, it does not feel like a place designed for children.

The restrictive physical environment mirrors the difficulty of interactions among jail staff and the restrictive, negative feelings among coworkers.

And I think that's what it comes back to. If you ask, the common consensus when you talk to anybody here [jail] will tell you—I mean, you hear it often, we're locked up in here with, with them, it's institutionalization. (Jail JJO #1)

Unlike the camp, where there is a weekly Wednesday check-in, the jail does not have regular meeting times for staff to debrief or check in. At the jail, the absence of this forum for communication leads to feelings of suspicion, isolation, and negativity among coworkers.

And there's stress. You know, sometimes it is actually easier to deal with the kids than to deal with staff. It is unfortunate... I want to feel [safe] like every time I go to work, and when I don't feel like that, safe, it kind of brings my stress level up a little more. "Okay, I'm on my own." (Jail JJO #3)

The JJOs from the jail described feelings that suggested they were struggling with cynicism. Cynicism is defined as a defensive, distancing mechanism that can make workers callous and impersonal toward clients and coworkers (Leiter & Maslach, 1988; Curtis et al., 1990).

It's very difficult. This place is inherently negative. It's just a sense of dread at times. But that just—that feeds off from staff, and then also the minors. (Jail JJO #1)

Yet JJOs in this setting still endorsed an empathic approach toward the youth they worked with—understanding their difficult life contexts and recognizing their struggles.

We took the job for a reason. We've gotta treat these kids with dignity and respect, and that's what we do. Sometimes by doing that and getting cursed and getting manipulated, all your patience is being tested not by one, but usually by about 25 or 30 kids in the unit. (Jail JJO #2)

A primary challenge for these workers was feeling unsupported by the work structure and hierarchy and feeling ineffective at helping these youth.

Whether it's on the line or within the management team or above the management team, there just doesn't seem to be that accountability being—there's nothing being done, I guess for it, and it's—that creates burnout, and that creates stress, and that creates hostility and a lot of other things. (Jail JJO #3)

In the jail JJOS can spend their entire shift behind the control desk except for periodic cell room checks and meal set-up. On many units, to avoid conflict, meals are eaten in silence. These meals take a surprisingly short amount of time (less than 20 minutes) when no one is allowed to talk. Observations indicated that the youth spend the majority of their time in their cells, which are operated by electronic locks controlled by the JJOs. They leave their cells to study in classrooms inside the Hillcrest Jail for one to three hours per day, eat in silence, go to the occasional court appointment or family visit inside the center, and—if a JJO has decided to design and lead a program—participate in activities such as making art, writing poetry, or appreciating music. There are approximately three to five hours on any day of otherwise unstructured time when JJOs can run programs with youth between school, meals, and other appointments.

The contrast between the subjective experiences of emotional labor, empathy, and meaning particular to these two groups of JJOs provides important emergent observations that call for further inquiry and analysis. JJOs in the camp are aware of the struggles of the youth they serve and feel empowered to help them, whereas their jail counterparts feel burdened by the negativity that arises from not feeling supported by their work conditions. The themes in this case illustration—common purpose and cohesion and stress, cynicism, and negativity—will be revisited through the lens of existent literature on workplace stress, empathy, and meaning.

### **Literature Review: Meaning to Cynicism**

JJOs' statements suggest that they are motivated to experience empathic relationships with the youth. They also describe instances in which they experience emotional resonance with the struggles of these youth, who frequently come from difficult psychosocial and familial situations. The core observation that inspired this literature review is that when JJOs are in the camp setting, they seem to experience a

process in which emotional resonance can be put to use in helping youth and sustaining meaning in work. In the jail setting, the same workers find that emotional resonance leads has no useful outlet, and instead becomes sympathetic distress leading to feelings of chronic stress.

The following sections explore the meaning of work in comparison with work stress. In particular, I will consider the core concepts of and relationships between emotional labor, emotional resonance and sympathetic distress in the workplace, stress and appraisal, emotion regulation, empathy, meaning, and motivation. This literature review progressively builds from opportunities for finding meaning and the potential ways finding meaning in work can serve as a buffer against feeling chronic stress (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Frankl, 1984). Research on professional empathy is reviewed, and the way in which cognitive empathy can facilitate meaning and help reduce stress is considered (Decety, et al., 2010). The review then shifts to examining the obstacles to feeling empathy and meaning, beginning with defining a root cause of stress: the sympathetic distress that can arise from emotional resonance with the suffering of clients. Understanding sympathetic distress in an interpersonally challenging work environment requires looking deeper into the appraisals that workers have about the demands of their workplace (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007; De Valk & Oostrom, 2007).

The human service workplace is a setting where expressed emotion is the primary form of labor (Glazer & Beehr, 2005; Hayward & Tuckey, 2011; Hochschild, 1983). A review of emotional labor is then compared to the literature describing the process of emotion regulation. A definition and description of the construct of burnout concludes the literature review with this well-established research on the stressors and felt experience of workplace stress (Cherniss, 1980; Jackson & Maslach 1982; Schaufeli et al., 2009).

### **Meaning and Motivation in Work**

The importance of experienced meaning and purpose in work were conceptualized by humanist psychiatrist Viktor Frankl over 50 years ago; however, research on the subject remains in its infancy (Frankl, 1984; Morrison et al., 2007). Frankl described meaning as the principal human need, and wrote that meaning allows self-transcendence and the ability to develop a purpose beyond the self. He stated that meaning could be found in three ways: through work, through another human, and through the attitude we take (or reappraisals we make) toward unavoidable suffering (Frankl, 1984). Frankl was not writing with human service care providers in mind, but each of these three avenues to meaning are available through human service work. Human service work directly involves encounters with other humans as well as an exposure to their unavoidable suffering in the form of illness, mental health struggles, incarceration, and myriad other circumstances, especially among under-resourced populations.

More contemporary definitions of meaning appear in varied literatures. Workplace research focuses on the match between individual skills and values—how one's outward abilities can be put to use in a manner in line with one's personal, intrinsic motivations (Cartwright & Holmes 2006; Chalofsky, 2003). Meaning can change the experience of spent effort, allowing hard work to feel

significant instead of merely exhausting (Brickman, 1987). Other contemporary meaning research defines the search for meaning as a sense of purpose, a set of values that provide a sense of “goodness” and positivity to life and a justification for action, a sense of efficacy, and a sense of self-worth (Baumeister, 1991). As mentioned above, the interpersonal and service-oriented nature of human service work allows for many potential opportunities to find meaning.

The intrinsic motivation for seeking a human service job suggests a desire for purpose and meaning. The idea that a workplace can fulfill a variety of needs beyond financial compensation has been recognized for decades (Warr, 1987). Organizational psychology literature that addresses the role of meaning in work has highlighted the role of interpersonal interactions and relationships, such as working with clients in human service settings, in finding meaning in work (Baron & Pfeffer, 1994; Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). A workplace can foster intrinsic motivation by increasing the potential and reward of quality interpersonal interactions (Morrison et al., 2007).

Human service providers who are not working in a professional job role, such as family caregivers, can manage their stress by finding meaning in their work. Family caregivers have an intrinsic motivation to be of service to their loved ones; however, their care burden can exceed that of professional care providers because of the relationship to their loved one and the continual hours spent in provision of care (Epel et al., 2004). When family care providers find an experience of meaning in their work, they experience less stress (Epel et al., 2004; Folkman, Chesney & Christopher-Richards, 1994). The meaning found in caring for loved ones helps promote positive emotions and is associated with a reconnection to underlying personal values which can improve positive coping (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). The pivotal role of meaning as a means of stress reduction for family caregivers is relevant to considering how meaning can promote positive coping in care-providing work.

Remembering our core motivation can help us reconnect, or strengthen existent experiences of meaning— which is something outside the self and separate from the finite, extrinsic rewards of money, status, or success (Duerr & Consulting, 2008). Success, especially with high-needs clients who are very sick or, in the case of juvenile justice youth, have very high recidivism rates, can be elusive; this can make workers feel hopeless (Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000). Still, as this case study in the camp and jail shows, working in a setting that enables JJOs to find interpersonal meaning can help JJOs manage emotional disconnection and cynicism.

One example of how interaction with youth can facilitate feeling meaning in the work comes from an exceptional observation opportunity in the jail, the “Probation Olympics”. On the annual week of these youth games, JJOs were enthusiastic in supporting youth through coaching basketball games and leading tug of war and other mini-competitions between units. The youth games are not lead by management, rather a single JJO has rallied his colleagues together for the last ten years to collaborate in this week of activity when youth would otherwise be in their cells all day while the school is closed. The games require a high level of cooperation and vigilance to orchestrate the jail-wide activities safely. Despite a higher level of

work, JJO report that they look forward to this opportunity to spend time with the youth outside of their regular disciplinary roles. The opportunities for empathic connection between JJOs and the youth can provide an opportunity for find meaning in their work.

### **Empathy**

Empathy is defined as two distinct processes occurring in concert: 1) the emotional resonance with another's plight, and 2) the cognitive appraisal of what is occurring (Davis, 1983; Decety, 2011; Halpern 2001). Experiencing emotional resonance alone does not always lead to sympathetic distress, however when the subject of empathy is suffering and the experiencer of empathy does not know how to manage their resonance this can devolve to self related anxiety and sympathetic distress (Decety, 2011; Halpern 2003; Hein & Singer, 2008). Studies have suggested that empathy involves regions of both higher and lower brain functions: The higher brain regions are associated with executive functioning which facilitates cognitive perspective-taking, and the lower brain regions correspond to the rapid, rigid emotional resonance with the situation (Decety, 2011; Iacoboni, 2009; Zaki, Weber, Bolger, Ochsner, & Posner, 2009). The appraisal process of perspective-taking allows a more targeted or accurate empathy and distinguishes another's personal distress situation from one's own; thus, it can actually serve to manage and decrease sympathetic distress (Decety 2011; Halpern, 2001; Ickes, Funder, & West, 1993). It is crucial to understand that empathy does not end with sympathetic distress; in fact, the emotional resonance that can lead to sympathetic distress can supply affective data that informs clinical and treatment decisions and curiosity, while perspective-taking allows targeted empathy and healthy separation of self and other, enabling the worker to assess the causes and conditions of the emotion-eliciting situation (Halpern, 2001; Krasner et al., 2009; Riess et al., 2012).

In other fields, especially medicine, the development of the cognitive appraisal skills necessary to separate the suffering of clients from the self appears to aid professionals to sustain empathy without suffering sympathetic distress (Halpern, 2003; Krasner et al., 2009; Riess et al., 2012). Cognitive appraisal skills include an openly engaged and curious listening stance as well as healthy therapeutic boundaries. Boundaries in professional settings require the provider to act in an ethical and careful manner with regard to the sensitive needs of clients (Gutheil & Gabbard, 1993).

Prior work suggests that empathy can also make challenging interpersonal work feel more rewarding and increase feelings of efficacy (Halpern, 2001; Riess et al., 2012), both of which may help prevent feelings of sympathetic distress and even burnout. Many care providers are drawn to emotionally engaging human service work because they are naturally empathic and seek the intrinsic rewards of helping others (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980). These intrinsic rewards are potentially more reliable than extrinsic financial sources of success. They have a more powerful and sustainable impact on work well-being and may help workers manage stress and promote positive appraisals of work (Brickman, 1987; Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Wallace & Shapiro, 2006).

The intrinsic rewards of helping others are directly related to feelings of meaning, purpose, and significance (Baumeister, 1991; Keltner, 2009). An important reason empathy may help buffer feelings of stress is that empathy is concerned with the relational part of human service work; this relational aspect is thought to be a primary source of meaning in work (Frankl, 1984). Finding meaning in work, as described above, provides sustainable motivation to persevere through challenging conditions and situations.

### **Emotional Labor**

Emotional labor is the performance of organizationally expected expressed emotions during interpersonal interactions with clients in the work setting (Hochschild, 1983). The performance of expressed emotions for emotional labor is not inherently dysfunctional or difficult. However, much like physical labor, this intangible labor has potential dangers when not performed with appropriate care and training. Job role expectations in client-based jobs, such as human services, dictate how and to what extent service care providers are supposed to express emotions as part of their services (Glazer & Beehr, 2005; Tschan, Rochat, & Zapf, 2005; Zammuner et al., 2003). Emotional labor requires the management of expressed, not felt, emotion to fit job roles, which often requires the amplification of certain expressed false (often positive) emotions and the suppression of other (often negative) emotions (Hochschild, 1983; Zammuner et al., 2003). Consider the example of a nurse smiling at a sick pediatric patient in a hospital despite feeling sad and afraid for the patient.

Because of their conflicting job role expectations, it is especially interesting to examine the emotional labor of juvenile justice officers. JJOs have dual job roles: They function in a rehabilitative capacity by providing positive affirmations for youth, and must also act as disciplinarians and suppress their positive responses while amplifying negativity (Lopez & Russell, 2008; Zapf, 2002).

Though emotional labor specifically describes the visible expression of emotion, there is an implicit internal affective process required when workers must not show how they authentically feel; this suppression of emotions is not necessarily just at a surface level (Gross, 2002). Emotional labor can be performed at a deep or surface level of acting and can result in different felt experiences (Haller et al., 2005; Zammuner et al., 2003). Deep acting is an internalization of the expected emotion and produces a more authentic emotional experience (Haller et al., 2005; Hayward & Tuckey, 2011). However, this deep acting can be distressing when emotionally resonating to the suffering of clients, as described above (Haller et al., 2005). On the other hand, surface acting, the more traditional form of emotional labor, conveys the appropriate vocal and facial expressions while suppressing authentic emotions (Zammuner et al., 2003; Zapf, 2002). Suppression has its own consequences: It can create an emotional dissonance that may make the worker feel alienated from work and elicit a variety of other negative physiological responses (Côté & Morgan, 2002; Zapf, Vogt, Seifert, Mertini, & Isic, 1999). Further research on the impact of emotion suppression has been extensively studied through the field of emotion regulation.

### **Emotion Regulation**

Emotion regulation is a term that describes how we manage our emotional communication to meet expectations in our personal, public, and professional lives. There are several forms of emotion: 1) physiological, 2) subjective experiential, and 3) expressive facial expression and likely behaviors. Our emotional response arises from the coordinated set of these forms, some of which are seen influencing behaviors and facial expression, and others of which are merely physically and subjectively experienced (Gross, 2002; Gross & John 2003).

Emotion regulation is how we manage these behaviors, and it can be used during different stages on the timeline of emotional response (Gross, 2002; Levenson, Ekman & Friesen, 1990). Although the physiological and subjective felt experience of an emotion occurs in less than a second, the emotion timeline has distinct stages: appraisal, felt experience, and behavioral response. The first stage is our appraisal of the environment. This is occurring automatically all the time; our appraisal of the environment is constant, but our emotional response only arises when we perceive that something significant or important to our well-being is occurring (Ekman, 1992; Gross, 2002). The appraisal is a critical moment of assessment that can influence our emotional response; it plays a role in determining whether we experience threat- or challenge-based stress. An over-aroused emotional response creates the felt experience of stress (Lazarus 1966; Mendes, Reis, Seery & Blascovich, 2003). Following the appraisal stage, there is the felt experience of the emotion in the body and our psychological experience of the emotion (Ekman, 1992). The last stage is our behavioral response to the felt emotional experience, which can vary from full and automatic expression to regulated forms of expression or suppression.

Regulation is then defined as: 1) no strategy, or an immediate, involuntary emotional reaction; 2) cognitive reappraisal following the first stage of appraisal to evaluate the trigger of emotion; or 3) expressive suppression once the emotion is felt in the body and through psychological experience. For example, imagine a JJO who observes a youth crying in their cell when she is doing a bed check. The first strategy, an immediate response, would be sharing in the sadness of the youth; the second strategy would require perspective-taking through talking with the youth or thinking about what circumstances earlier in the day might have led to this grief; and the third strategy would be to see the crying, feel the sorrow, and then suppress the felt experience by trying not to think about the situation (Gross, 2002; Hayward & Tuckey, 2011).

As suggested in the section on emotional labor, the responsive strategy of suppressing high levels of sadness, fear, or anger has physiological consequences, and can lead to feelings of inauthenticity and self-alienation (Bonanno, Papa, Lalande, Westphal, & Coifman, 2004; Levenson, Ekman & Friesen, 1990). The masking of what is authentically felt can be more taxing on the physical system than simply responding to the initial trigger (Levenson, Ekman, & Friesen, 1990). Additionally, suppression can prevent the cognitive repair of the emotion. If the emotion is unexpressed, it cannot be dealt with. It is immediately relegated to a non-cognitive state, while the physiological arousal of the emotion is increased in comparison to a non-suppression strategy (Gross, 2002). Responsive strategies to suppress emotions and avoid emotional resonance can also lead to the dampening

or suppression of all emotions, including the enjoyable emotions (Gross, 2002; Gross & John, 2003). It is likely that the short-term regulation strategy of suppression of felt emotion can lead to a long-term increased burden of stress in the workplace (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Hochschild, 1983; Zapf, 2002).

Knowing the limitations and consequences of suppression, it is important to investigate strategies for cognitive appraisal or reappraisal that can be used to manage and regulate sympathetic distress at the antecedent stage before the behavioral response. Cognitive reappraisal strategies help “down-regulate” over-arousing emotional responses by using cognitive skills that help maintain perspective (Davis, 1983). Research on the neuroscience of empathy suggests that cognitive reappraisal can be a tool to manage sympathetic distress; in fact, empathy may contribute to emotion regulation in part because empathy involves cognitive reappraisal (Decety, 2011; Decety et al., 2010).

### **Emotional Resonance and Sympathetic Distress in the Workplace**

Humans are hardwired for automatic emotional resonance with the expressed emotions of others, especially intense negative emotions such as pain and suffering (Iacoboni, 2009; Ickes, Funder & West, 1993). Neuroscience researchers have shown that our brain’s response to seeing pain automatically and subconsciously activates our mirror neurons to produce a mirrored, sympathetic mental pain, also described as emotional resonance, which as described above can devolve in to self-related anxiety and sympathetic distress (Iacoboni, 2009; Iacoboni & Lenzi, 2002). This automatic pathway to emotional resonance and sympathetic distress is the precursor to the natural proclivity to empathy, altruism, and compassion. However, a balanced and accurate empathy also requires cognitive appraisal (Baron-Cohen, 2011; Batson et al., 2005; Hatfield & Rapson, 1998; Hein & Singer, 2008).

Human service settings are rife with calls for empathy; this is due to the automatic emotional resonance that human service workers experience as a result of seeing the struggling and suffering of clients (Davis, 1983). This resonance motivates our empathy, and we naturally feel good about helping others, which provides a powerful intrinsic motivation to be of service (Batson & Shaw, 1991; Keltner, 2009). However, when one does not feel that one can actually help or respond to the resonance, for example (due to limited resources), the experience can become sympathetic distress (Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980; Klimecki, Leiberg, Lamm, & Singer, 2012; Zammuner et al., 2003). Thus, sympathetic distress can motivate workers to help others and create a rewarding feeling, but when the workers continually feel they lack efficacy to respond to the suffering, this escalates the distress and can precipitate burnout (Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980; Maslach, 1982).

### **Stress and the Role of Appraisal**

Individuals differ in the degree to which they experience sympathetic distress for the suffering of others. For some, emotional resonance with another person’s suffering feels overwhelming; for others, it is simply a call to react. The variation in stress triggers has to do with individual assessment or appraisal of the situation, in addition to the situation itself (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The Lazarus



and Folkman model of stress describes the differences in individual-level appraisal and types of stress responses.

Prior research indicates that appraisals occur after initial emotional resonance, and predict how the individual sees the demands of the world around them (stressors) in relation to their perceived resources to manage the situation. The same conditions can elicit threat- or challenge-based stress (responses), corresponding to the individual's unique perception of the stressors (Akinola & Mendes, 2012; Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, & Salomon, 1999; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). When an individual appraises their resources as sufficient to meet the demands, the stress is a challenge that functionally helps rally their psychological and physiological responses to manage difficult situations (Akinola & Mendes, 2012; Blascovich et al., 1999; Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). However, when someone perceives the demands as outweighing the resources available, they may feel distressed. Chronic experience of this distress leads the worker to experience threat-based stress, in which they have limited response flexibility and fall into a fight, flight, or freeze mode (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

In the workplace, threat- and challenge-based stress can arise from fear, anger, or anguish from interpersonal work with clients and coworkers, as well as from strict and rigid organizational structures that define an insensitive workplace (Lazarus, 1966; Tschann, Rochat, & Zapf, 2005). For example, a worker who experiences support from coworkers while managing the demanding behaviors of an aggressive youth who has just arrived to the camp would rally a challenge-based response. However, the arrival of the same aggressive youth combined with a lack of trust in coworkers and management (such as those described above in the jail setting), could lead to threat-based stress. An ongoing state of threat-based stress is too draining to manage everyday and can lead to a strategy of emotionally disengaging, as is conceptualized in over three decades of research on burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2009).

### **Burnout**

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is a cornerstone measure used in the study of chronic stress in the workplace. It draws together the topics of emotional exhaustion (including sympathetic distress), lack of efficacy, and depersonalization (also described more recently as cynicism) (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). The MBI was designed specifically for human service care providers to capture separate but overlapping phenomena of feeling emotionally overwhelmed and unable to meet the demands of human service work, suffering from feelings of diminished personal accomplishment, and experiencing emotional withdrawal from clients (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

The MBI is made up of subscales which create a continuous measure that reflects the distinct but overlapping experiences of three domains: emotional exhaustion (the fatigue of interpersonal interactions), lack of efficacy and personal accomplishment (the feeling that you cannot get anything done and that what you do does not matter), and cynicism (a disconnection from the work and clients) (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Emotional exhaustion is a common experience among those working in interpersonally challenging settings with high-needs clients; however, burnout is more than simply emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion

can lead to feeling lack of efficacy as well as depersonalization. Importantly, lack of efficacy and diminished feelings of personal accomplishment can interfere with being able to sustain a sense of meaning in the work. Cynicism is of particular significance in the context of this study. The emotional withdrawal associated with cynicism inhibits empathy, and as described above, without the opportunity for empathy, there is also an inhibited opportunity for meaning.

An important feature of the MBI's definition of burnout is its scope. It is not intended to capture the acute experience of a stressful day, or examine the experience of being a stressed-out person in all domains of life. Instead, it measures the cumulative experience of chronic stress in the workplace. However, burnout can indeed impact domains outside of work. Qualitative interviews with the families of police officers showed that burned-out officers were more likely to display anger, spend time-off away from instead of with the family, and have unsatisfactory marriages and diminished pleasure with family life. Burnout among these police officers carried over to predict higher rates of alcohol and drug use as well as insomnia (Jackson & Maslach, 1982).

### **Analysis of Factors and Experiences of Jail Stress**

The literature reviewed suggests the potential fruitfulness of considering interpersonal interactions among youth and between coworkers as both sources of stress and opportunities for finding meaning. These JJOs build relationships with coworkers and youth in order to manage the everyday problems and issues that inevitably arise from work with groups of challenging and interpersonally demanding youth. The camp JJOs manage this emotional labor through collaborating with their coworkers to connect to and guide these youth through mentoring and relationships. In contrast, the JJOs in the jail often feel as though they do not have the resources to meet the demands of their emotional labor. They must make their own opportunities to connect with youth, are not praised for this effort, and feel a sense of negativity and disconnection from their coworkers.

As with many other groups of human service care providers, the lack of efficacy felt by JJOs is fueled by feelings of job role ambiguity, overload, and conflict (Bandura, 1977; Glazer & Beehr, 2005). Not all the workers in this setting suffer from cynicism; however, the negative attitudes described by jail JJOs can indeed be a contagious source of emotions and stress among all staff (Hatfield & Rapson, 1998). Alternately, in the camp setting, the same initial compassionate motivation can lead to successful empathic interactions with youth, a feeling of connection with core motivations and meaning, and, as described above, "common purpose and cohesion" among coworkers.

This process of preliminary analysis sets up the focus for the next phase of the research. Specifically, the obstacles to meaning that manifest as workplace stress among JJOs from the jail require further investigation, both from relevant literature related to workplace stress as well as with more targeted data collection from this case study population of JJOs. The literature for the next phase will build on the themes of sympathetic distress, empathy, and meaning covered in this literature review and move on to a review of workplace stress-specific literature including a focus on stressors, the experience of stress, and coping responses. These

themes are further explored through iterative analysis of the semi-structured focus group responses to questions about these topics, and descriptive analysis of survey measures on empathy, professional quality of life, and burnout. Before moving on to the primary phases of this study, a chapter on methodology will follow.

## CHAPTER TWO: METHODS

### Case Study Rationale

The case study methodology is a tool for empirical inquiry used to ask “why and how” questions about an individual or a group that has been previously unstudied or under-examined (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). The case study approach is especially suitable for examining these phenomena in “real life” contexts where creating experimental designs can be too challenging or can interfere with the observation of the phenomenon itself. Case studies use a linear but iterative approach to study design, drawing on various sources of data including qualitative, quantitative, and literature reviews (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). An iterative approach describes research questions and study designs that evolve through ongoing analysis and reflection (Strauss & Corbin, 1997). This method anticipates the possibility of unexpected, “emergent” findings leading to new questions or ideas that can shape the study itself (Lofland & Lofland, 2006). Exploratory observational techniques allow for the emergence of new concepts, in the context of the current study, to explore stress, empathy, and meaning among JJOs (Holloway, Brown, Suman, & Aalsma, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1997).

Case study methodology is overarching and can include a variety of established qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques, as will be described below. The present case study focuses primarily on qualitative data collection based in well-established iterative techniques (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). However, this study departed from the traditional grounded theory approach of entering the study site with no prior hypothesis or literature review. In line with a social work research approach, the researcher’s first-person work experience was an acknowledged departure point for study questions (Abrams, 1996; Gilgun 1994; 2010; Goffman, 1966). This approach is called deductive qualitative analysis, and incorporates not only relevant literature but also reflections from direct practice social work experience to inform the formulation of research questions, methods, and hypotheses (Gilgun, 2000, 2006, 2010). Similar to grounded theory, deductive qualitative analysis relies on immersion within the field setting and on an ongoing iterative process of theory building by comparing data sources throughout the research process (Glaser & Straus, 1967, Strauss & Corbin 1994; Yin, 2009).

The study was carried out in three phases, a preliminary observation phase, a focus group phase, and a phase that focused on the delivery and evaluation of a pilot training. Each data collection phase was accompanied by new literature reviews.

The data sources included in this study are participant observation, focus groups, literature reviews, and surveys. At each phase of the study, these data were consistently re-approached through the process of iterative analysis to look for new themes, categories, and concepts (Holloway et al., 2012; Lofland & Lofland, 2006). This iterative process was applied to transcripts of field notes from participant observation and focus groups with open and axial coding to translate rough categories of observation into concepts that relate to the overarching research questions about stress, empathy, and meaning (Holloway et al. 2012; Strauss & Corbin, 1994, 1997; Abrams 1996; Gilgun, 2010). Literature reviews were

completed at each phase of the study to provide background and context for questions and concepts arising from the data.

### **Case Study Context**

This case study was done with Juvenile Justice Officers working inside a locked juvenile jail facility. There is limited research about this population group, although a great deal is known about the characteristics and experiences of the challenging youth they serve (Abrams, 1996; Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Division of Juvenile Justice, 2013). These youths are disproportionately youth of color coming from low socioeconomic status neighborhoods with overlapping status in the foster care and child welfare systems. While in juvenile jail, they spend a majority of their hours locked in cells under the supervision of JJOs (DCRDJJ, 2013). This study context offers many opportunities for new study questions regarding the youth and JJOs; however, this case study focuses completely on the JJOs. The youth are part of the study context, but are not the focus of the study question.

### **Study Site**

San Mateo County has a population of 718,451. Hillcrest Jail is part of the courthouse and probation department. JJOs work inside six units that can hold a total of 30 youths each; there must be one staff member for every ten youths. The units are arranged in a semicircle, and each unit shares one or two doors with a unit next door so that many more hands can be available quickly if there is a fight between two youths or an attack against a staff member. The JJOs have a main desk with several computer screens that keep track of institutional data, including the scheduling of each youth's court dates and school times, as well as other relevant internal information. The main JJO desk faces two stories of individual locked cells, each with a small four-by-six window. JJOs do a visual check inside each cell every 20 minutes. When a youth is on suicide watch, the checks to that cell are more frequent. There are approximately 80 Youth Supervision employees who cover fulltime shifts in the residential units of the Hillcrest site. The staffing ratio is three staff for every ten youths; there are approximately 160 youths at any given time who are awaiting court or sentenced for stays from 45 days to two years. There are approximately 80 Youth Supervision employees who cover fulltime shifts in the residential units of the Hillcrest site

### **Study Design**

The intended contributions of this study are: (1) developing a descriptive baseline understanding of stress among an important and understudied population of human service care providers, (2) exploring human service care provider workplace stress through a new lens of empathy and meaning and (3) piloting a training to reduce stress with a focus on facilitating empathy and meaning. This research is carried out over three phases.

This data is drawn from a single case study method of inquiry. Phase one of the study began with participant observations at two different juvenile detention settings, the Hillcrest Jail and the Glenwood Camp. The observations were framed by the question: How are stress and empathy manifested in these stressful settings? The analysis of observations in these settings suggested an exploratory inquiry: that differences in organizationally structured job role expectations can shape the JJOs' experience of sympathetic distress through inhibiting or enhancing

opportunities for empathy with the youth. Such empathic engagement might help manage the JJOs' distress by facilitating a feeling of a common purpose and finding meaning.

In phase two, focus groups were conducted and existent survey measures were given to develop more concrete baseline descriptions of juvenile detention workers' experiences of workplace stress, empathy, and meaning and factors that might relate to these experiences. The analysis of these factors was applied to a review of literature on stress reduction interventions, which led to the development and piloting of a skill-based intervention aimed to help manage the interpersonal and intrapersonal stressors and stress experienced by this case study population.

Phase three was the design, delivery, and evaluation of the pilot training. The training was delivered to two samples of JJOs and was evaluated with focus groups to assess its basic feasibility. The analysis of these evaluation data precipitated an additional review of literature relevant to meaning in work. This literature review sharpened the exploratory inquiry of the study regarding a potential relationship between stress, empathy, and meaning in work—which offers an analytic framework for further empirical study.

## **Procedure**

### **Study Site Strategy**

The relationship with the institution began through a meeting with the deputy chief arranged by the pilot intervention co-trainer, Chris McKenna, who had been working as a meditation trainer with the youth in the jail for over five years. Over a series of meetings, the deputy chief agreed to allow me to shadow JJOs on work shifts in order to perform participant observations and to organize focus groups. The principal interest of the deputy chief was to support the JJOs. He believed many of his staff to be suffering from stress and burnout, and he was eager to work toward the goal of organizing a pilot training to support the staff. To facilitate the delivery of training for staff, the Deputy Chief arranged to have the training certified by the State of California so that the JJOs could receive paid time off to attend and earn credit for their annual state-required training. The research design was shaped around initial opportunities to observe and interact with staff, then to offer focus groups and distribute surveys, and finally to implement a pilot training designed to fit the specific needs of these JJOs

### **Participants**

Participants were Juvenile Justice Peace Officers working directly with the youth; these JJOs work in shifts to supervise the youth for 24 hours a day inside the Youth Service Center in San Mateo County. Approximately fifty JJOs participated in some phase of the study: 36 completed surveys (but 16 of those were pilot training participants), an additional 11 JJOs participated in focus groups, and there were at least five direct conversations during participant observation and over twenty JJOs observed in their work environment. All participants were over 18, spoke English, and held a minimum of a college degree. There is a total of approximately 80 JJO staff in San Mateo. The demographics were collected with the surveys, these are a group of JJOs who already have many years of job experience in this role and who plan on staying ten years or more in the job, most likely until retirement.

Table 1.

*Demographics*

N=36	
Average Age	39
Married	47%
Divorced	11%
Child in the Home	41%
>4 years on the Job	98%
>8 years on the Job	52%
Staying 10 years or more	75%

**Recruitment Procedures**

For the participant observation, I was invited by the deputy chief to shadow staff on a variety of units during regular work shifts. The deputy chief had an Institutional Services Manager (ISM) bring me to a unit and introduced me as a researcher doing a study on “burnout.” I informed JJOs that everything seen and said was confidential, disclosed my shared status as a human service care provider in a direct-practice setting, and described the intention of the study: to support and understand JJOs managing stress in their workplace.

For focus group recruitment, ISMs described the purpose of the study at the staff meetings. Staff were encouraged to participate during their normal work hours by management, who provided full coverage of their shifts while they took part in the group. No workers who wished to participate were turned away; the only criterion for participation was current employment with San Mateo Probations.

**Phase One and Two**

**Participant observation.** This was carried out over six months, from September of 2011 through April of 2012, on four separate trips to observe three-hour shifts in three different units within the detention center and one three-hour trip to the boys’ camp offsite. The four trips included visits to: 1) the boys’ long-term unit, where youth are held for six months to two years; 2) the girls’ unit; 3) the maximum-security unit for violent offenders who will be going to adult prison once they turn 18; and 4) the boys’ camp, where the youth stay a minimum of two months and a maximum of six.

The sample of various units and locations was intentional. The objective was to observe JJOs working across the full spectrum of youth served across both gender and severity of crimes. The JJOs work on a six-month rotation between locations and shifts and the majority of JJOs have worked in every location and on every shift.

**Data collection procedures.** While visiting the worksites, field notes were collected and reviewed the same day to capture salient details and reflections about the interpersonal behaviors and interactions among JJOs, between JJOs and supervisors and management, and between JJOs and youth. Field Notes appear in Appendix F.

**Focus groups.** Three semi-structured focus groups were offered in June and July of 2012. They were offered during morning (n=6), late afternoon (n=3), and night shift (n=2) time slots to accommodate workers with day, swing, and night

shifts. The number of participants was limited to six to provide sufficient response time for all participants. Each focus group was 60 to 120 minutes long, and was audio recorded. The interview protocol was a starting point; however the semi-structured design and the use of open-ended questions meant that the JJOs were also guiding the conversation according to the topics and themes that they introduced.

The semi-structured interview protocol was based on stressors and stress observed during participant observation and the key sources of workplace stress described in the literature review. The left-column questions are designed to elicit responses about stressors (factors that lead to a stress response), including organizational and interpersonal factors; the middle-column questions ask about stress (the feeling of emotional over-arousal) experienced in response to challenging conditions and specific cases; and the right column asks about responses to stress (coping strategies) like empathy, social support, motivation, and meaning and satisfaction in the work.

Table 2.

*Focus Group Questions*

<b>Stressors</b>	<b>Stress</b>	<b>Response: Empathy, Motivation, Meaning</b>
Please describe what you understand to be the expectations of your job.	Do you feel a sense of threat of physical harm in your everyday work?	What was the motivation that brought you to this job?
How does this match what you do in your everyday shift?	Have you felt burnt-out recently? What does burnout feel like? How long does it last?	Has this changed over time?
In what ways does your role at work match your personality and in what ways does it not? Are you are the same person at work and at home?	What is a case when you wanted to do more and could not; what more did you want to do? Why couldn't you do it?	Describe the role of cooperation with your coworkers in your everyday shift?
Do you think part of your job is to be a "bad guy" with clients or coworkers?		Please give examples from your experience of when: You have strongly identified with the experience of a youth; maybe the experience reminded you of yourself or someone you know. (What did you do? How was this different from what you normally do?)
What are the top sources of stress in your everyday work		What are examples of: Times you felt success with the job?



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environment? (This environment can include the physical space of the units, the social space of coworkers, the actual work managing, and programming with the youth.) How are coworker concerns dealt with?

What was the source of success?

What are examples of: Something you feel especially well suited to do in your job?

When you have a question about your work, who do you ask?

When you feel stress from your work, who do you talk to?

**Quantitative data collection.** The quantitative portion of the data collection was carried out to provide further information on quality of life, empathy, and various dimensions of burnout that are related to stress and meaning. The burnout and quality of life scales provide subscales that capture various elements of interpersonal stress response such as emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, as well as feelings of personal accomplishment and satisfaction, which are close to the study concept of meaning. The existent empathy survey examines various domains of empathy, including personal distress and empathic concern; however, the questions do not take into account people who work in high-stress environments where there is everyday exposure to suffering.

The limitations of these survey measures are that they were not designed for a juvenile justice population. Additionally, the surveys were not given to the focus group participants, which means that the focus group participants could overlap with those who decided to take the surveys later or represent a different group of workers who decided to participate then the workers who decided to fill out the surveys. Previous research in correctional settings has hypothesized that cynicism among workers may make it difficult to capture authentic survey responses for fear of reprisal from management (Holloway et al., 2013).

**Recruitment and survey collection procedures.** Following the completion of participant observation and focus groups, surveys were made available to all Juvenile Justice Officers, regardless of participation in participant observation and focus groups. Twenty-one responded out of a total of around 80 JJOs in San Mateo, and an additional 16 surveys were filled out by JJOs who attended the pilot training, making the total number of survey respondents 36, for a response rate of 45%. The availability of surveys was announced during shift meetings by ISMs, and I showed up to shift meetings to describe survey intentions and answer any questions. Because a prior institutional study administered internally by the management about safety planning was emailed to staff at San Mateo and yielded a return rate under 11%, management believed that distributing hard copies would improve survey completion. The survey packet included a demographic information sheet

developed from the relevant literature. The scales and demographic information collected are described below.

**Scales.** The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) Human Services Survey is a 22-item self-report survey instrument that has been extensively used to measure chronic workplace stress specifically with workers in interpersonally challenging work settings. The MBI is made up of subscales which create a continuous measure reflecting the distinct but overlapping experiences of three domains: emotional exhaustion (the fatigue of interpersonal interactions), lack of efficacy and personal accomplishment (the feeling that you cannot get anything done and that what you do does not matter), and cynicism (negativity and disconnection from the work and clients) (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996). The MBI has been used internationally to assess human service workers in many organizational settings.

The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) is a 28-item self-report survey instrument with four subscales evaluating distinct dimensions of empathy, which are analyzed independently. The perspective-taking (PT) subscale measures the reported tendency to spontaneously adopt the psychological point of view of others in everyday life. The empathic concern (EC) subscale assesses the tendency to experience feelings of sympathy and compassion for unfortunate others. The personal distress (PD) subscale evaluates the tendency to experience distress and discomfort in response to extreme distress in others. Finally, the fantasy (FS) scale measures the tendency to imaginatively transpose oneself into fictional situations (Davis, 1980). The IRI subscales have been shown to be reliable and reproducible measures of sensitivity to the views and feelings of others. The measure has been used to study empathy in experiments with fMRI-based neuroscience, observational experiments in social psychology, and psychophysiological stress and emotion research (Iacoboni, 2009). However, this scale has not been widely used with correctional populations or other professional populations working in settings with high exposure to the suffering and struggles of unfortunate others.

The ProQuality of Life Scale (ProQoL) is a 30-item self-report survey instrument designed to measure professional quality of life (Rudolph & Stamm, 1999). In the ProQoL, there are three subscales: secondary traumatic stress (STS), work-related secondary exposure to people who have experienced extremely or traumatically stressful events; compassion satisfaction (CS), the pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well; and burnout (BO), defined in this scale as part of compassion fatigue characterized by feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or in doing one's job effectively (Stamm, 2009). The instrument has undergone psychometric evaluation of construct validity and subscale reliability (Rudolph & Stamm, 1999). This scale was designed specifically to quantify the benefits as well as burdens of the work of human service care providers.

**JJO demographics.** Although prior research shows weak, if any, relationships between age, education, ethnicity, or marital status and the experience of burnout (Lambert, Altheimer & Hogan, 2010), the following basic demographic characteristics were collected in order to describe the sample: age, years in this job, years of relevant experience, education level, marital status, number of children in the home, ethnicity, intent to leave job. Gender was not included in the

demographics; the Department of Corrections states that there is an even split in the gender of the JJOs and gender was not included on the demographic sheets.

### **Phase Three: Curriculum Development and Evaluation**

**Participants.** The pilot training was delivered to two groups of JJO staff who had not participated in prior phases of research. The first group included six JJOs and the second included ten. All participants were over 18, spoke English, and held a minimum of a college degree.

**Recruitment.** For the two-day pilot stress skills training, JJOs were informed that they had an opportunity to participate in a stress training in order to earn credits toward annual peace officer requirements.

**Curriculum for pilot training.** The design of the pilot training program drew from the phase one data on sources of stress matched to relevant literature on stress-reduction intervention. Additionally, in collaboration with the administrative staff of the San Mateo Department of Probations, the training was certified by the State. The state certification allowed the JJOs to participate with full pay and work coverage and receive training credits toward their annual requirements. The curriculum is presented in Chapter Four.

**Field notes.** The entirety of the training was audio-recorded to provide a reference for field notes and observations about the overall implementation of the training.

**Focus groups.** There were three focus groups, with all of the 11 pilot training participants divided into a groups of five, four and two at the end of the second day of training. Each focus group lasted approximately one hour and was audio recorded. The semi-structured interview protocol was based on the learning objectives (see Table 1 below). The interview protocol was a starting point; however, the semi-structured design meant that the JJOs were also free to guide the conversation according to the topics and themes that they introduced.

The content of the focus groups was transcribed and reviewed, and was used to answer key questions about the feasibility of the training. Specifically, JJOs were queried about what worked in the training, what skills were used, what would be important to cover in future trainings, how the training might be made more feasible, and what was enjoyable and not enjoyable about the training.

Table 3.

#### *Evaluation Focus Group Questions*

1. How might you integrate what you learned from this training into your home and work life?
2. What will you take away from this training?
  - a. Would you recommend this training to a colleague?
3. What parts of this intervention are useful to these workers?
  - a. Mindfulness exercises. (Experiential)
  - b. Identification/reconnection to motivation and meaning. (Experiential/Didactic)
  - c. Psychological education on burnout. (Didactic)
  - d. Development of a vocabulary of emotion, emotion timeline, and triggers. (Experiential/Didactic)
  - e. Practicing the felt experience of emotion. (Experiential)

- f. Professional Empathy Training. (Didactic and Experiential)
- 4. What, if anything, do you feel was useful in this training?
- 5. What are your suggestions for how to improve the training?
- 6. Do you have any additional thoughts or suggestions?

**Online evaluation.** To determine the extent to which the training achieved its learning objectives, an online evaluation of the training was emailed to all participants. A five-point Likert scale (with responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree) was provided to collect responses to questions about the training. The questions about the learning objectives are listed in Table 4 below.

Table 4.

*Online Evaluation*

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the statements below about learning objectives.

- 1. I understand more about emotions and stress as a result of the training.
- 2. I can use the information and practices about professional empathy in my everyday work and home life.
- 3. I can use the information and practices about self-compassion in my everyday work and home life.
- 4. I learned meditation relaxation skills I can use in my everyday work and home life in the second day of training
- 5. The Micro Expression Training Tool online will be useful in my everyday work and home life.
- 6. The training helped me reconnect to my motivation for doing the work I do.
- 7. I would recommend this training to other staff.

**Literature Review**

The literature on stress and human service providers has many gaps; it does not offer a thorough consideration of the provision of empathic care to clients, the benefits of human service work in the form of meaning, interpersonal and intrapersonal factors and experience of stress, or intervention strategies that can support workers in these settings. In contrast, there is well-established research on depersonalization, cynicism toward the job and clients, the structural and organizational factors of workplace stress, and the experience of stress through poor job outcomes and diminished mental and physical health (Cherniss, 1980; Jackson & Maslach 1982; Poole & Regoli, 1981; Schaufeli, Leiter & Maslach, 2009). As mentioned above, throughout the case study phases, the literature review expanded in response to data collected.

The diagram below shows the literature reviewed over the course of the phases of the study, from observation to pilot development. Phase one reflects the basic description of stress mechanisms and explores extant research on empathy and meaning. The arrows represent the literature that was brought from phase one into phase two—the subsequent, more targeted examination of sources of stress, responses to stress, and buffers. The analysis of this literature combined with the phase two data guided the review of training intervention-based literature that informed the design of the pilot.

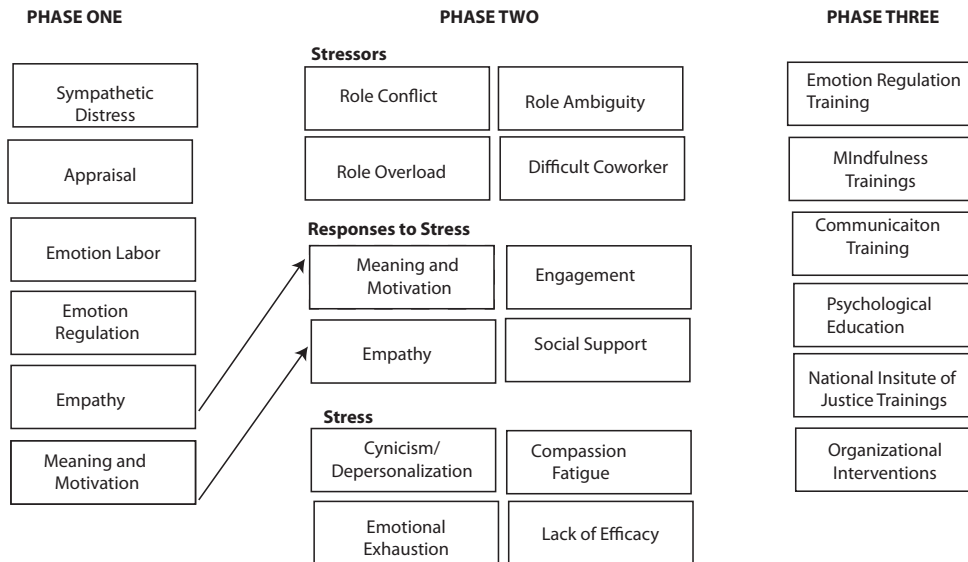


Figure 2. Literature Reviews

### Analysis Plan

Reflecting the iterative case study approach, each phase of research underwent analysis and comparison across sources of data and literature. Each phase of analysis was cumulative and shaped the approach of the next phase. Phase one analysis compared observational data on the underlying mechanisms of stress and the opportunity for empathy with relevant research literature in order to generate the questions for the focus groups in phase two. Phase two analysis used reviewed literature on sources of workplace stress, stress responses, and buffers against stress to inform the code development for focus group data. Further description of code development is included in Chapter Three.

The codes were then compared to one another to assess overlap and further development of categories. This analysis was paired with the descriptive survey responses and literature on stress-reduction interventions to shape the curriculum of a pilot training. The analysis covering the basic feasibility of the pilot then led to the concluding discussion of future directions for study. Further details on the techniques and tools used to analyze data through each phase will accompany the data in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER THREE: JUVENILE JUSTICE OFFICER STRESS

### Chapter Overview

This chapter describes the second phase of the case study. Results from phase one suggest the importance of understanding the sources of perceived workplace stress and how such stress, if present, might bear on the experience of empathy and meaning. Chapter One reviewed literature on the underlying mechanisms of stress, empathy and finding meaning from work from social psychology, psychophysiology, sociology, and neuroscience. That chapter then considers how these concepts could be applied to the workplace.

As described in Chapter Two on methodology, this phase of the study begins with another literature review, which is sharply focused on stressors (the stimulus of stress), the felt experience of stress, and coping responses to stress specific to the study of the workplace. The data for this next phase were generated from semi-structured focus groups with JJOs (n=11) in the jail as well as an additional review of observational data collected in phase one, and surveys of burnout, empathy, and professional quality of life (n=36).

Focus group responses were organized into codes reflecting patterns of subjective responses about the workplace. These codes were then reviewed to identify emergent concepts about workplace stress and empathy. Analysis of the categories and concepts that emerged in focus group data were then considered alongside the themes from the literature review and compared to a descriptive analysis of survey responses. The analysis of this data directly informed and shaped the development of the pilot training in phase three.

### Scope and Significance of Work Stress

Nationally, 69% of all employees report that work is a significant source of stress and 41% say they typically feel tense or stressed out during the workday (APA, 2009). Chronic stress has concrete bio-psycho-social consequences. It can influence hormonal processes and cause serious damage to immunological functioning; precipitate coronary and pulmonary disease; lead to mental health distress in the form of depression and insomnia; promote risky behavior such as alcoholism and overeating; and lead to familial strain (Epel et al., 2004; Marmot, 2002; Maslach, Leiter, & Schaufeli, 2008). Workplace stress is estimated to cost the U.S. more than \$300 billion through time lost due to absenteeism, retraining workers after turnover, diminished productivity, and disability leave (APA, 2009).

As described in the introduction, workplace stress in the criminal justice setting—in both adult and juvenile jails—has not been researched as thoroughly as workplace stress in other human service settings (Kienan & Malach-Pines, 2007; Poole & Regoli, 1980; Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000). The limited extant research on this group reveals rates of chronic workplace stress that surpass stress experienced in other human service settings (Dowden & Tellier, 2004; Keinan & Malach-Pines, 2007). Relative to adult corrections and probation officers, even less is known about frontline Juvenile Justice Officers (JJOs) (Steiner et al., 2003), but the evidence suggests that they are especially susceptible to workplace stress, due to the

difficulty of the work environment and the level of emotional labor (Lopez & Russell, 2008; NIJ, 2005).

To help these workers manage stress, much more needs to be known about workplace stressors, stress, and responses, especially in understudied settings. This study focuses on examining the role of empathy and meaning as responses to workplace stress (Batson et al., 2005; Keltner, 2009). Empathy is a core but ambiguous part of the JJO job role, which requires that they consider, and resonate with, the source of clients' emotions (Hayward & Tuckey, 2011; Hochschild, 1983). Phase one literature and data suggested that empathy could be both an opportunity to find meaning as well as a significant stressor, and is deserving of further investigation. The potential benefits of finding a common purpose and meaning at work (as reported by the camp JJOs in Chapter One) underscores the importance of reviewing literature on positive coping and buffers to stress. The literature review, thus, further explores the potential importance of the constructs derived from earlier chapters of empathy and finding meaning through the lens of organizational psychology.

### **Stressors, Stress, and Coping**

There are three focal areas of research in work stress: 1) the study of the stressors themselves, 2) the study of the felt experience of stress, and 3) the study of responses to stressors (Akinola & Mendes, 2012; Blascovich et al., 1999; Lazarus, 1966; Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000). Each area of research contains organizational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal levels, which are important to understanding the overall picture of chronic workplace stress. As described in Chapter One, the limited literature on stress and work conditions in the juvenile and adult justice system has focused on the influence of organizational-based stressors (Lambert, Altheimer, & Hogan, 2010; NIJ, 2005; Roush & McMillen, 2000). Commonly attributed stressors among JJOs and adult correctional officers are the prevalence of manipulative inmates held against their will, the perception of a lack of safety on the locked units, understaffing, and supervisor demands. Such stressors are largely organizationally circumscribed (NIJ, 2005; Krisberg, Vong, Hartney, & Marchionna, 2010). However, there is also a small body of literature addressing the relational aspects of stress in the workplace, which will also be reviewed.

The predominant models of workplace stress provide a conceptual foundation for the current study (Gerstein, Topp, & Correll, 1987; Griffin, Hogan & Lambert, 2012; Leiter & Maslach, 1998). All of these models examine how a person's appraisal and experience of stress interacts with the "environment," which encompasses relationships with supervisors and coworkers, job role demands, external demands, and organizational characteristics (Gerstein et al., 1987; Griffin et al., 2012). The "personal and job factors" model incorporates the three dimensions of burnout into an evaluation of how situational job characteristics impact the individual workers through these specific issues of job overload, lack of control, insufficient reward, breakdown of community, absence of fairness, and value conflicts (Leiter & Maslach, 1999). These models all suggest that job stress is especially difficult when there is a mismatch between individual coping skills and job demands. The second phase of this study developed focus group questions to

elicit the individual subjective experiences of these job and personal variables in a understudied Juvenile Justice setting.

Further workplace research that has examined individual differences in stress experiences as a function of personality traits, age, and length of time in the job has not shown conclusive evidence. For example, women as a group do not experience more stress than men, nor do workers who have a greater length of time in the job necessarily have less stress (Gerstein et al., 1987). Demographic characteristics are captured in this phase of the study to evaluate if there are any significant individual differences.

This study reviewed the predominant models of personal and job variables to guide the focus of inquiry to intrapersonal self-appraisals of stress and empathy, interpersonal relationships with coworkers, management, and clients and job role expectations. In this study, less attention is paid to organizational and work structure factors, defined as the more macro-level issues, such as the physical workspace (Gerstein et al., 1987).

The literature reviewed below is organized by: 1) stressors; 2) buffers of stress and positive coping, including empathy; and 3) responses to workplace stress. The boxes below show the topics that will be covered in the literature review organized by the stressor, stress, and response. The topics that have already been described are in the Introduction (role conflict) and Chapter One (empathy, meaning, and motivation, and lack of efficacy). This literature review will be revisited and compared with the analysis of the codes of data collected from JJOs that describe stressors, stress, and responses.

Stressors	Role Conflict	Role Ambiguity	Role Overload	Difficult Coworker
Stress	Emotional Exhaustion	Cynicism/Depersonalization	Lack of Efficacy	Compassion Fatigue
Responses to Stress	Empathy	Engagement	Social Support	Meaning and Motivation

Figure 3. Literature of Workplace Stressors, Stress and Coping

### Workplace Stressors

Prior research in organizational psychology extensively documents the stressors arising from various difficulties associated with the enactment of the job role. A limited literature has applied these difficulties to the Juvenile Justice Officer job role specifically (Triplett, Mullings, & Scarborough, 1996). Thus, this next section examines the stressors with a primary focus on the job role and difficult coworkers. Although these job role topics are written about as separate phenomena, they can influence one another and be cumulative in their impact on stress.

Job role related research examines a combination of organizational and intrapersonal experiences of workplace stress. Job role is defined as the organizationally expected tasks a worker is required to fulfill. These tasks shape the identity the worker inhabits in the workplace (Glazer & Behr, 2005). While job



role expectations are not necessarily stressful for JJOs, in particular, trouble can arise with dual and conflicting job role expectations, overload of job role tasks, and ambiguity (Krisberg, et al., 2010; Mears et al., 2010). The very nature of the job includes opposing, and often conflicting, job role expectations: rehabilitative and disciplinary (Lopez & Russell, 2008; Marsh, Evans & Williams, 2010). As described in the history of the Juvenile Justice System (JJS) in the Introduction, the expectation of JJOs to perform more of either job role can shift every couple years (Steiner et al., 2003). As a result, keeping up with the evolving expectations of the JJS can contribute to role conflict (Steiner et al., 2003). According to Steiner et al. (2003), “Role conflict arises as a result of the complexity that is created when individuals are presented with several different overlapping roles” (p. 53).

Lack of clarity about the management of conflicting job roles can also contribute to ambiguity. Job role ambiguity occurs when the frequency, content, and scope of specific tasks are unclear. This is exacerbated by ambiguity of official expectations of the reality of the work. For example, supervisors often expect officers to “go by the book” and follow all rules to the letter, when in reality supervisors and line officers alike know that officers must be flexible and use their judgment in their high-intensity interactions with inmates (NIJ, 2005). Job role overload describes tasks that surpass the individual’s capacity to successfully complete them. This can result from a lack of training, resources, or time (Poole & Regoli, 1980; Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000). Overload is a common problem for all employees in public institutions. Of particular relevance to this case, the state budgetary cutbacks that have occurred over the last five years in California contribute to both increased workloads and decreased resources for JJOs. Job role conflict, ambiguity, and overload can create a negative feedback loop, each further contributing to an overall experience of a lack of efficacy and success in the job (Cherniss, 1980; Glazer & Beehr, 2005; Ivancevich & Matteson, 1980).

Another important source of workplace stress is the presence of difficult coworkers. Interpersonal interactions with coworkers in the correctional setting can provide social support, as was described by JJOs in the camp setting, or they can feel additional stress, as described by JJOs in the jail. The presence of noxious, burned-out coworkers who complain and cannot be depended upon has been a reported source of stress among correctional workers. Moreover, their stress can be contagious (Maslach et al., 2008; NIJ, 2005). Coworker stress arises from workers who express disrespect, lack of trust, and contagious negativity and who simply do not fulfill their tasks, thus burdening their coworkers (Belle, 1987). The job role challenges, in combination with a lack of coworker support, can threaten a worker’s feeling of efficacy, or their ability to do the expected work; this will be expanded on below in the description of burnout.

### **Burnout, Chronic Workplace Stress, Stressors**

The examination of the phenomenon of stress is describes a felt experience of stress as opposed to the study of the stimulus or stressors. Research on workplace stress considers a variety of subjective experiences of stress including psychological (e.g., depression), physical (e.g., cardiovascular impact), and behavioral (e.g., lack of sleep) (Epel et al., 2004; Jenkins & Maslach, 1994; Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000).

The felt experience of burnout arises through a cycle of stress that begins with providers who feel emotionally overwhelmed and unable to meet the demands of human service work, and, thus, withdraw emotionally from the job role (Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980; Lambert, Hogan, Altheimer, Jiang, & Stevenson, 2010; Maslach, 1982). Researchers have proposed a number of explanations regarding the relationships between the dimensions of burnout, which are emotional exhaustion, lack of personal accomplishment/efficacy, and cynicism (Maslach et al., 2008). Some research cites cynicism as a negative coping technique used to manage emotional exhaustion (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007). Other research suggests the opposite: that cynicism leads to emotional exhaustion (Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000). The model used in this study suggests that emotional exhaustion can lead workers to feel that they lack coping resources and diminishes feelings of personal accomplishment/efficacy, leading to a state of cynicism (Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000). The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) measures three domains of stress: emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) and was thus included as a measure in the study.

Emotional exhaustion describes a phenomenon similar to sympathetic distress that arises from emotional resonance from challenging interpersonal interactions that develop in to self related anxiety (Decety, 2011). Emotional exhaustion represents the “basic stress component” of burnout, when workers feel used up and without any energy or resources to make it through the day (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al., 2008). Emotional exhaustion can arise as a result of the worker feeling overwhelming demands in the workplace.

Feelings of self-efficacy, as described in Chapter One, influence the initiation of coping behaviors and determine how much effort will be allocated toward persisting through difficult circumstances (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy beliefs are bolstered when individuals perceive that they have adequate intrapersonal resources to meet the demands of the work. This can create a positive feedback loop when reinforced through successful experiences (Bandura, 1969; Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is included as a domain of the burnout scale called personal accomplishment (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996). Personal accomplishment encompasses feelings of success within the job role and that the individual labor can achieve its purpose. Thus, personal accomplishment can provide a link for workers to find meaning in their work. This is an important link to feeling purpose and meaning. When the worker feels a lack of efficacy due to stressors of job role conflict, ambiguity, and especially overload (too many tasks to achieve successfully), however, a negative feedback loop can also occur, which impairs feelings of accomplishment (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1980; Tschan et al., 2005).

Cynicism describes a negativity and disconnection from the identity of the job role that leads workers to express callousness toward clients. Cynicism is a salient response to stress, especially in criminal justice settings (Poole & Regoli, 1980; Curtis et al., 1990). The antagonism and manipulation of many inmates (NIJ, 2005) have a distinct influence on the job role and stress. According to Poole and Regoli (1980), “Cynicism has been conceptualized as pervasive feeling combining sentiments of animosity, antagonism, and disillusionment” (p. 303).

Cynicism was initially believed to be a result of the organization and nature

of prison work; however, research has demonstrated that, in fact, cynicism is more relationally based (Poole & Regoli, 1980). The deterioration of relationships between prison staff and inmates and coworkers occurs alongside the rise of cynicism (Poole & Regoli, 1980). Cynicism is a strategy that uses emotion suppression to try to block sympathetic distress, as described in Chapter One (Holloway et al., 2013; Zammuner et al., 2003). As also described in Chapter One, this strategy is unsuccessful over time because the emotions are not blocked internally—they are merely masked externally, and the blockage reduces the intrinsic rewards and meaning of the work (Tschan et al., 2005). Additionally, cynicism can interfere with making empathic connections to clients that allow the worker to pick up on important emotional cues that are being communicated (Riess et al., 2012).

These three domains—emotional exhaustion, lack of efficacy, and cynicism—describe the complexity of workplace stress that can result in excess negativity. It is important to note that too much compassion can also trigger a stress response. Compassion fatigue (also called vicarious traumatization and secondary traumatic stress) arises among professionals who are working closely to compassionately support clients who have suffered, or are actively suffering from, trauma (Rudolph & Stamm, 1999). As described in Chapter One, the stress that arises from working with clients who are suffering is a sympathetic distress and is common in human service settings (Davis, 1983). The distress can feel overwhelming and lead to a reduced capacity or interest in being empathic to the trauma of clients (Rudolph & Stamm, 1999). This diminished state of empathy arises from a prolonged exposure to and identification with the trauma and suffering of clients (Adams, Boscarino, & Figley, 2006). A subscale of compassion fatigue is included in a survey measure in this study. Compassion fatigue is believed to be associated with feelings of burnout but focuses more specifically on the psychological impacts of shared traumatic experience that come from traumatic client work (Adams et al., 2006)

### **Responses to Workplace Stress**

The literature on response to stress and coping is a meaningful, counterbalance to the research on stressors and stress (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This stress and coping literature is defined by positive (i.e., functional) strategies for managing stress, including using meaning to reframe the stressors and responses (Epel et al., 2004; Folkman et al., 1994; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). The buffers against workplace stress encompass a variety of strategies used to transform stress from threat to challenge and even meaning (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000).

As described in Chapter One, empathy in the workplace includes resonance with the emotional experience of a client coupled with a cognitive perspective-taking of that client, which can inform the quality of the interpersonal interaction (Decety, 2011; Halpern, 2001; Ickes, Funder, & West, 1993). Empathy as a strategy for responding to workplace stress has not been commonly researched; it has been examined through the lens of social psychology as a response to the natural environment, but not as part of a job role. The closest approximation to the study of engagement in the workplace is the study of work engagement among human service care providers where there is an implicit connection to clients.

Work engagement is a more recent field of study in the field of organizational psychology, and has been written about in the context of workplace stress as the opposite of burnout, with reversed domains of energy, efficacy, and involvement (Maslach & Leiter, 1999). It has also been considered an entirely distinct concept made up of vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002). An engaged worker is invested and involved emotionally with the job, including client services and relations with coworkers. This worker is willingly investing resources in the job because the work feels compelling—not just because they feel an absence of exhaustion and cynicism (Gonzalez-Roma et al., 2006). However, as with empathy, the emotional investment required for this kind of engagement can lead to emotional exhaustion (Jenkins & Maslach, 1994; Gonzalez-Roma, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Lloret, 2006).

Interpersonal connections with colleagues can also provide meaningful coping and be a buffer for stress (Marsh et al., 2010). Social support is measured in different domains: coworker, supervisor, and family/personal (Lambert, Altheimer, & Hogan, 2010). Among coworkers, social support includes diffuse support via friendship, guidance, and comfort, as well as more instrumental help with work tasks (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Positive coworker support influences workers' feelings about personal accomplishment and efficacy (Lambert, Altheimer, & Hogan, 2010). Coworkers can mitigate job role overload directly by providing instrumental help with tasks, and diffusely by fostering meaning through shared experiences and serving as valuable sounding boards for feelings of frustration, stress, and success (Marsh et al., 2010).

An interesting and un-replicated finding about relational support in the correctional setting emerged from a study about contact and quality of relationships with inmates (Gerstein, et al., 1987). This study aimed to examine various job characteristics in order to evaluate what factors were buffers against feelings of stress and burnout. They found that the correctional officers reported that the opportunity of forming quality relationships with inmates was more significant than the relationships formed with coworkers or supervisors in mitigating burnout (Gerstein et al., 1987). This resonates with the experience of the JJOs in the camp setting, where the quality of contact with the youth seemed to provide workers with a sense of purpose and meaning, and they reported less feelings of stress.

Also, as described in Chapter One, finding meaning can provide motivation and rewards. Finding meaning in the workplace has received slightly more attention in the organizational psychology literature than empathy; however, it still remains an under-researched area of study. Finding meaning in work involves a match between individual skills and values: how one's outward abilities can be put to use in line with one's personal, intrinsic motivations (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Chalofsky, 2003). In human service settings, there is an implicit expectation that workers have an intrinsic motivation to carry them through challenging interpersonal work; however, the limited research on workplace meaning does not include explicit distinction between motivation and meaning (Morrison et al., 2007). This intrinsic motivation to help others, altruism, does feel good and has the potential to create meaning for human service workers (Batson et al., 2005; Folkman & Mosokowitz, 2000; Monroe, 1996; Poulin, Brown, Dillard, & Smith,

2013). The basic act of helping others buffers the personal distress associated with witnessing suffering (Poulin et al., 2013; Davis, 1983).

This literature was a pivotal reference for analysis of the focus group data as well as the survey measures. Comparison of the qualitative and quantitative findings to the literature allows for discerning emergent findings and how they connect to extant research.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

The analysis of data in this study explores stressors, stress, and responses to stress in the human service role of Juvenile Justice Officers. In line with the case study approach, multiple sources of data are analyzed and compared. The majority of these data are qualitative and are analyzed descriptively, for frequencies and for overlapping content, and then compared back to the literature review above (Yin, 2009). The quantitative data from the surveys are also examined descriptively and then compared to the qualitative data and literature review. Comparisons among these sources of data allow for the emergence of new ideas, as well as confirmation of findings in the research literature on other human service providers, which can be applied to this case study sample of JJOs.

#### **Participant Observation**

As described in the methods chapter, participant observation was carried out over six months, September of 2011 through April of 2012, on four separate trips to observe three-hour shifts in three different units within the detention center and one three-hour trip to the boys' camp offsite. As described in chapter two, the four trips included visits to: 1) the boys' long-term unit, where youth are held for six months to two years; 2) the girls' unit, where youth are also held for six months to two years; 3) the maximum-security unit for violent offenders who will be going to adult prison once they turn 18; and 4) the boys' camp, where the youth stay a minimum of two months and a maximum of six. During the visit, field notes were taken and compiled. The preliminary analysis of these field notes was a key component of the design of the focus group questions. This analysis of the field notes reexamines the content through the lens of workplace stress—its sources, responses, and buffers.

Observations over the course of these three-hour shifts spent with the guards on four units revealed emergent categories related to stressors and opportunities for empathy with the youth. Participant observation provided in-context observations of how the JJOs interact in their everyday work lives. The findings from this phase of the study are described below.

**Stressors: coworkers.** Mirroring the literature on coworker stress, JJOs described deep concern, frustration, and even fear about the lack of instrumental support (covering shifts, monitoring the youth) and diffuse support (cooperation). Nearly every staff member I spoke with said the negativity of coworkers was a major source of stress. I was told about coworkers who did not do their jobs, who were perceived as burned out and negative, who did not make others feel safe on the unit, who would gossip to other staff and even youth, and who would act bossy.

“You get labeled and judged; after nine years I am used to it,” one JJO told me about her coworkers. A number of JJOs told me that a big issue on the units was bossiness; many of them used the expression “too many chiefs, not enough Indians” to describe coworkers who acted as though they were in charge and would act bossy to other JJOs.

The level of antagonism among coworkers was demonstrated while I was on the girls unit talking to one female JJO, JJO (JJO#9). Another female JJO (JJO#10) approached us and aggressively stated that JJO#9 was the source of her stress. A shouting argument ensued as they each blamed the other for being the source of their stress and burnout.

**Responses to stress: connection and satisfaction.** As described in the literature on meaning and empathy reviewed above, some of the JJOs were able to develop opportunities for feeling their work was meaningful, by making connections with the youth. Everyday, the JJOs could choose to engage in creating programs for the youth in their units; this activity was the most direct opportunity to engage with the youth. Among the JJOs who decided to create programs, there was clear satisfaction and pride in their work. I observed one JJO who organized an official celebration for youth who were earning their GEDs. She told me it helped her, the youth, and their families feel proud of something they were able to do while on the unit.

While I was sitting behind the guard desk on another visit to the units, a JJO took a phone call. She was friendly, asking how the caller was doing, and giving support and encouragement. She then told the caller to try again later so she could talk to me. The JJO told me that the person calling was one of the youth who had been on the unit for a couple of months. The youth was calling her to let her know she was doing well in school and to tell her about her struggles with her family back home. The JJO told me that youth would often call the unit to talk with the JJOs after they were released from the facility. She said that although youth tended to avoid the probation officers monitoring them in the community, many of those who had connected to JJOs during their incarceration would call the units to catch up with JJOs, get advice, and generally check in.

I asked JJOs on other units if they got calls, and many stated that they did. The “revolving door” of the Juvenile Justice (JJ) system means youth are retuning frequently to the units, as are their family members. The JJOs can have relationships with these youth and their brothers and sisters that span years. One guard told me he had testified on behalf of a youth in court when he got arrested as an adult; the youth went on to junior college and still keeps up with the JJO. One or two JJOs shared stories about letters or phone calls from youth they had connected with who kept in touch to let them know they were employed, had a family, and/or were in school. The JJOs sounded satisfied and connected when they talked about these experiences.

### **Focus Groups**

The content of the focus groups was transcribed and iteratively reviewed for emerging categories and themes that related to the overarching research questions about stressors, stress, and responses to stress. The transcripts were loaded in Dedoose, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) tool that aids in

marking salient excerpts through line-by-line open coding and creates platforms for further axial coding. Axial coding is a method of comparing the data to itself by exploring the relationships among coded material (Lofland & Lofland, 1995).

The development of the focus group questions came from observations inside the jail and from the literature on workplace stressors, stress, and responses to stress. The transcribed responses to the focus group questions were batched into basic categories of interest inside of Dedoose. The transcripts were read, selected, and reviewed to develop codes and then read again to apply codes. The codes led to further emergent concepts about the initial themes and led to the next phase of inquiry. The specifics of this process are described below.

The qualitative approach to the analysis of the focus group data was iterative and began with open line-by-line coding that was then developed into emergent categories of responses, as stated above. I was the sole coder on these documents with the support of a research group to review code choices. Due to the small number of participants inter-rater reliability check on the codes was not preformed. These categories were reviewed and compared to one another and to the original research questions in order to assist in the development of actual codes. The codes were attached to excerpts from the JJOs' own words; there were more than 30 codes in the first iteration. These codes were reviewed through content analysis and reduced for redundancy to 20 codes. Content analysis requires a close look at the excerpts being coded to evaluate whether the coded excerpts are unique or whether there are codes covering the same emergent categories (Lofland & Lofland, 2006). In the first phases of coding there are many more codes than there are sufficient data (excerpts) to support them; through content analysis and looking for redundancy, the number of codes is narrowed down to represent key and unique categories (Yin, 2009).

There were a total of 11 participants in the three focus groups; half were female, and all except for two participants had worked in the jail longer than five years. From transcripts of the focus groups, 385 excerpts were highlighted as having relevant and important content related to the original research questions about sources, responses, and buffers to stress or empathy and meaning. All excerpts received at least one code, depending on the relevant content in the excerpt. Each JJO contributed an average of 35 excerpts; however, there were three JJOs with more than 50 coded responses. These three JJOs who spoke the most did not account for increasing a single code; their coded responses were distributed across different codes.

The final round of iterative analysis focused on the most frequently used codes, because frequency suggests greater salience of coded categories. However, the codes for empathy, motivation, and meaning were also included, even with low frequency. Although they were not as prevalent as the discussion of stressors in the focus groups, they are highly relevant to the case study (Eisenhardt, 1989).

In the end, there were eleven codes that represented both stressors and empathy. The codes are: 1) Work Structure and Hierarchy, 2) Cynicism and Negativity, 3) Lack of Communication, 4) Coworker-Related Stress, 5) Frontline Work Stress, 6) Role Expectations, 7) Empathy and Engagement, 8) Motivation, 9) Meaning, 10) Success, and 11) Working with Youth. The codebook below describes

the six categories that were made into codes relating to stressors and stress; the remaining five codes will be discussed later. Examples of key illustrative excerpts are included to provide an example of the direct voice of the JJOs in the data (the demographic variable of years of work in San Mateo is included). These excerpts also show how more than one code can be applied to the same excerpt; this will be described in further detail with the axial coding analysis.

Table 5.

*Stressors and Stress Codebook and Excerpts*

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**Work Structure and Hierarchy** is defined as the content and communication of organizational policies and rules from the institution; hierarchy implies rules/expectations that are passed down from management.

Work Structure and Hierarchy

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 10

Whether it's on the line or within the management team or above the management team, there just doesn't seem to be that accountability—there's nothing being done... and it's—that creates burnout, and that creates stress, and that creates hostility and a lot of other things.

Work Structure and Hierarchy, Cynicism and Negativity, Lack of Communication

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 12

I guess people tend to forget we are the front line of the probation department. We are the bottom of the toilet bowl. We deal with all the negative, foul stuff that no one wants to deal with. We feel like a lot of this extra stress that they throw on—lack of staff, lack of communication—all that stuff, we feel like I'm sure a little cooperation they could help us out on that side.

---

**Cynicism and Negativity** is defined as pervasive feelings of negativity and a depersonalized stance towards the work and work environment—feeling chronically unsupported and viewing the workplace as toxic.

Cynicism/Negativity, Work Structure and Hierarchy

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 10

Because we don't trust. I don't know if that's the right word, but if we don't trust the management, we think they're kind of suspect, then we don't know how to receive, perceive instances where they're recognizing (for good) the person. You know, so then we're kind of spiteful. You know, we're just kids who are older

Cynicism and Negativity, Work Structure and Hierarchy, Lack of Communication, Coworker-Related Stress

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 9

As you talk to somebody (management if you have an issue) everybody knows. Even if it's outside (not during work hours). We have programs here that could assist. You can go through counseling, you can go through concern, we have all



this stuff, but once again everybody (coworkers) knows. So that's a whole 'nother level of stress. That's ridiculous. And it makes you angry. But you still have to keep fighting and coming here, because you still have that mortgage to pay.

---

**Lack of Communication** is defined as a lack of trust among coworkers, managers, and top-level administration; information is not passed along as it should be.

Lack of Communication, Cynicism/Negativity, Work Structure and Hierarchy  
Years of Experience in San Mateo: 14

That's why I was interested in coming and doing this research (focus group), because how do you expect to change and improve and affect the lives of these youth if the folks who are working with them primarily, you know, don't feel understood or served themselves? So, yeah.

Lack of Communication, Cynicism/Negativity, Work Structure and Hierarchy  
Years of Experience in San Mateo: 10

So then you send out this bull shit ass memo, emails or something. It's just like no connection. It's like no connection. This is going to connect—I never knew Mr. Jimenez did that. You know, sit down and tell us. We can never really be real at those meetings anyway, but at least we have the sort of opportunity to get one thing in. . . If you don't communicate on a real level, you know, the memos are just not going to work. They should just be for announcements, you know, like babies and anniversaries and retirements.

---

**Coworker-Related Stress** refers to stress caused by coworkers who communicate poorly, have negative attitudes, are lazy, or gossip.

Coworker-Related Stress

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 3

So that's the biggest pressure that I had, was with my peers unfortunately and not wanting to say something (about bad behavior of-coworker) in fears of retaliation and I didn't. And because I had to hold stuff inside, I didn't want to talk to anybody, I was on edge

Cynicism and Negativity, Coworker-Related Stress

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 10

There's a handful of people that this stress does affect, and there are some people that put up very, very thick walls against getting close to any of the youth, and that walls usually represent anger and I was going to say cruelty, but that's kind of not the word I'm looking for. Just angry, and their wall is so thick that

they don't see the youth that they're talking to or understand some of their actions.

---

**Frontline Work Stress** refers specifically to the aspect of the job role that involves providing direct one-on-one care to youth (rather than being behind a computer or in an office). This includes the locked environment and unpredictable circumstances with the youth.

Frontline Work Stress

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 12

We're always surrounded by a negative environment, being around these kids.

Frontline Work Stress

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 3

Being in these walls we're locked up all day too. Sometimes we're not given an opportunity to go for a walk, sometimes we're just that busy.

---

**Role Expectations** is defined as whether the JJOs know what is expected of them in their jobs and whether they feel they are succeeding in their roles.

Role Expectations

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 14

Expectations, yes, those are clear in terms of your daily duties and responsibilities. That's—that's fine. I think where the cloudiness comes is expectations with—the whole management in general, it's not—it causes a lot of—there's friction or just cloudiness, and you don't really get a clear understanding of what's expected.

Table Six below shows the frequencies of these six codes from the focus group transcripts. The overlap of code attributions is discussed in greater detail in the axial code analysis.

Table 6.

*Code Frequencies*

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Work Structure and Hierarchy	109
Cynicism and Negativity	71
Lack of Communication	58
Coworker-Related Stress	41
Frontline Work Stress	35
Role Expectations	33

The outstanding prevalence of “Work Structure and Hierarchy” is very important. In many cases, workers report that they do not feel as though the work structure in which they are working is concerned with their well-being and instead find that it is an obstacle to doing their job well. In addition, the hierarchy that defines how everyday work tasks are carried out is also an obstacle and a stressor. The code was initially presented as two different codes, one for each phenomenon;

however, the overlap between the two codes was almost 100%, meaning that these frustrations with the organizational aspect of the workplace were related to both the idea of work structure and the idea of hierarchy.

“Cynicism and Negativity” describes stress—the experienced feeling that results from the other stressors—which accounts for its high frequency. As mentioned earlier, the codes listed above which scored above 30 were included in this analysis for the purposes of developing important areas for the development of the pilot training. In Appendix F is a list of all the codes that were included in the last round of analysis

### **Axial Coding**

Following the analysis of the frequencies, also known as open coding, axial coding was performed in Dedoose to look for overlap and relationships among codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, 1997; Holloway et al., 2013). Table 7 provides an illustration of this axial coding that shows where excerpts have more than one code applied to them. The codes with the highest overlap were “Work Structure and Hierarchy,” which overlapped with “Lack of Communication” 25 times and “Cynicism and Negativity” 26 times. This overlap could mean that work structure and hierarchy acts as the overarching concern which relates primarily to feelings about the organization and structure. However, the frequency of its appearance alongside interpersonal stressors such as “Lack of Communication” and “Coworker Stress” could suggest a relationship between feeling interpersonal and organizational factors of stress. “Lack of Communication” always overlaps with at least one other code (53 out of 53); it most commonly overlaps with “Workplace and Hierarchy” (26 out of 53). These overlaps again suggest that lack of communication may be related to the stressors of work place and hierarchy, feelings of cynicism, and coworker stress; alternately, lack of communication may be redundant with the combination of these three codes. “Cynicism and Negativity” is also always overlapping with another code (71 out of 71), however its overlaps are spread across many different codes. The highest overlaps are “Work structure and Hierarchy” (25 out of 71) and “Coworker Stress” (12 out of 71). “Coworker Stress” has equally moderate levels of overlap with “Cynicism and Negativity” (12 out of 41) and “Work Structure and Hierarchy” (12 out of 14). There is some relationship among these codes that could suggest redundancy of codes or an important relationship between stressors—this is another emergent area of interest for further conceptual building.

“Frontline Work Stress” (35) and “Role Expectations” (33) were most frequently coded in comparison to “Work Structure and Hierarchy” (109), but they did not overlap with many of the other codes, suggesting that they have independently distressing aspects. The overlap of “Role Expectations” with “Work Structure and Hierarchy” makes sense in light of the literature about how roles are transmitted through organizational expectations.

Table 7  
Focus Groups' Axial Codes

Stressors	Work Structure and Hierarchy	Coworker Stress	Cynicism/Negativity	Lack of Communication	Frontline Work Stress	Role Expectations
Work Structure and Hierarchy	109	12	25	26	5	11
Coworker Stress	12	41	12	7	2	0
Cynicism Negativity	25	12	71	11	1	2
Lack of Communication	26	7	11	58	2	3
Frontline Work Stress	5	2	1	2	35	1
Role Expectations	11	0	2	3	1	33

### Comparing to the Literature Review

As compared to descriptions and frequencies in the reviewed literature, there are some confirming and emergent trends among the focus group codes. In some cases the codes fit the literature well, and in others the findings appear to be emergent.

**Stressors.** Role conflict, ambiguity, and overload all contributed to the stressor of “Role Expectations”; however, ambiguity was most commonly attributed to challenges of role expectations. Additionally, the most prevalent code, “Work Structure and Hierarchy,” came closest to role conflict, although it also included more organizational functions and the hierarchy of how the institution is run. The code representing “Frontline Work Stress,” including the physical environment and scheduling issues, supported the concepts from the literature about the challenges of role overload and the feeling that there is simply too much to do.

As predicted in the literature and the participant observation, “Coworker-Related Stress,” covering a variety of negative expressions from lack of safety to gossiping, was among the most frequent codes and had similarities to the literature on difficult coworkers. Lack of communication, with coworkers as well as with management, was an important stressor that surpassed the simple issue of difficulty with coworkers and specifically described an ongoing frustration and confusion arising from a lack of transparency.

**Stress.** Cynicism, matching the characterization in the literature of a pervasive negative feeling related to workplace conditions, a callousness towards clients and detached attitude, was the most salient theme for the experience of stress.

### Summary

What is seen from analysis of the codes, excerpts, frequencies, axial comparison, and comparison to the literature on stressors is a clearer picture of the

clustering of certain stressors and feelings of cynicism. The stressors are primarily related to organizational structure, as captured in “Workplace Structure and Hierarchy.” JJOs feel cynicism primarily about the workplace structure and also about the lack of communication and coworkers. Feeling a lack of trust among coworkers was described in considerable detail. Less frequently, workers also mentioned the very real challenges of the frontline work environment—i.e., of being locked in with high-needs teens and having a shifting schedule that moves from day to swing to graveyard shifts every six months.

The experience of cynicism and many stressors create obstacles to JJOs’ feeling safe, understood, and respected at a basic level. This can inhibit the workers’ availability to connect with the youth and to experience meaning in their work. At the same time, the analysis below of empathy, motivation, and meaning demonstrates that workers value opportunities for connection with youth and derive a feeling of meaning from this.

### **Empathy and Engagement, Motivation, Meaning in Work and Success**

In this section codes and selected excerpts are used to illustrate how the codes develop into concepts. Unlike the prior section, which sought to identify specific stressors and used numerical tallying to rate the salience of these codes, this section descriptively explores specific answers to focus group questions about positive coping strategies. These codes were applied to content which responded to questions specifically which asked about: 1) Empathy and Engagement, 2) Motivation for Job, 3) Meaning in Work, 4) Success, and 5) Working with Youth. Every JJO in the focus group was asked about their initial motivation to start the job and what success felt like. In terms of motivation, all of them stated they began the job to “help youth” in one fashion or another. When asked to assess whether they felt continued Motivation and/or Meaning, it was clear that the JJOs had realized the limitations of what they could do, and were mainly focused on safety and basic respect, as reflected in the excerpts below. JJOs described struggling with a response to the success questions; they often reverted to adhering to the most basic job role expectations such as safety. It sounded as though they were reluctant to hope for more than this.

Table 8

*Empathy and Meaning Code Book*

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**Empathy and Engagement** is a code applied when a worker describes relating to the youth emotionally or with cognitive curiosity, and demonstrates engagement in this interpersonal part of the work.

Empathy and Engagement

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 3

You don't understand everything. You can't. It's impossible. You do have an understanding and a respect. You do understand some things, and you're trying to work with them at things. Even with the girls, I feel like I know how to do that. You know, you see a lot of things that you saw with your sisters.

Empathy and Engagement

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 14

...you don't know what's going on at home. You don't know what the environment is. You don't know all of those stressors.

In here (the jail) they can be model citizens and do what they want, but as soon as they get home, when they have a generation of gang involvement in the whole family. They go right back. That's what they know how to be or they're pressured or they're doing. They're druggies or alcohol use. You just try to connect with them here and don't make them feel any less, show them respect, you get the respect back.

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**Motivation for Job** describes the JJO's motivation for the job; the answers relate to why people were originally drawn to this work.

Motivation for Job, Meaning in Work

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 12

We took the job for a reason. We've gotta treat these kids with dignity and respect, and that's what we do.

Motivation for Job, Meaning in Work

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 3

(What is important in this job) it's also role modeling, because you can't teach if you're not doing it yourself. They're (youth) gonna look at you more than anything. And I think it does apply to who I am. I'm a teacher but I also have to be a role model, to my family members, to people I grew up with in my neighborhood. They want to see that I'm doing the right thing.

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**Meaning in Work** is applied when a JJO describes that they feel good about the work they do, about what they are able to achieve with the youth, and in general.

Meaning in Work, Empathy and Engagement, Motivation for Job,

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 3

I feel like we—me personally, being a male there, and having positive males in their lives, like I take on willingly the responsibility to do that. So I think it does have a big impact, especially with the recidivism being so high. It bothers me that they're sad, because I see them on the unit, because they got arrested again. So I'm never really like angry with them. I'll usually talk to them. Sometimes a kid will come back in (re-arrested after release) and I'll go see them real quick and just—just the fact that they're embarrassed that you're seeing them shows you that you do have a good relationship with them. You know, they cuss their parents out when they're being arrested.

---

**Success** describes the JJO's assessment of their feelings about whether they have made some progress or done their job well.

Success

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 3

I think we only have like the ability to measure the failure. We can't measure the success, because it's rare that they come back and talk about it. It's like: What is the success? That they went to college or that they never stabbed anyone again in their life? That's like success.

You could talk down to a minor that in their mind, they're thinking about like murdering someone, and then they end up not doing that. We just record the recidivism, going back, it's failing, but you know, after a while, you know in your head, a safe shift is a success, in reality, when there's like four days in a row with two codes a day. It's like we just need like a safe shift for kids. You bring a presence of control and stability. It's like you said, the kids feel safe. They're not going to be all anxious the whole time.

#### Success, Personal Safety

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 9

I feel that way (success) every time I go home and everything was not perfect, but my staff members, my coworkers were safe, no one got hurt on that day, no one got put on modified duty, there was no cult or anything going on in the units, we had adequate staff to work with where everyone was not only safe, but actually the staff felt safe. It wasn't perfect, and we don't have a lot of days like that, but we got the job done.

#### Success, Engagement and Empathy

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 14

(Success is) They feel safe. They feel confident. They're not belittled. Like he (another JJO) made a prime example, if that boy comes back (to the jail) and he's embarrassed to see you, that means you made an impact, and at some point, the kid—he's validating your thought on what he thinks. So if you can make that kind of—that's an impact. You might not make the impact where he's going to stop using or stop drinking or stop his—whatever is putting him here, but if you made a positive impact on his life at that point, maybe it's going to carry him.

**Working With Youth:** a code that described when JJOs mentioned the youth they work with.

#### Working with the youth, engagement & empathy

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 13

Personally, for me, I never wanted to work in the Adult Division. It was always juvenile, because of that sort of hope, I guess, that you could keep them from getting to that next level. I've come to realize that that's not necessarily the case for the most part with a lot of our youth, the revolving door for some of them. But I think that for me personally, it would be a whole different—I think the stressors of working with adults would be a lot more than dealing with these youth. I still consider these kids—I mean, they are kids. They're eighteen and under for the most part; so they're kids.

**Frequencies.** The frequencies of these codes are displayed below. They are notably lower than the codes applied to stressors, indicating that these topics were less discussed than stressors. In axial coding, “Meaning in Work” overlapped with “Motivation for Job” 11 times, and overlapped with “Working with the Youth” 10 times. “Empathy and Engagement” overlapped 9 out of 43 times with “Working with Youth” and 10 out of 43 times with “Success.” The positive coping responses of meaning, motivation, and empathy frequently included descriptions of working with youth, suggesting the relationship with youth was important.

“Success” also overlapped with “Working with Youth” 10 times. “Success” was described in terms of what could be reasonably expected within the system, a system that, as one guard stated, is set up to measure failure, not success. Positive feedback from the youth was broadly defined, ranging from youth simply acting respectful of the JJOs to youth appearing embarrassed to see a JJO when they were being brought back to jail. Creating an atmosphere of basic safety for the youth and coworkers on the unit was also described as an indicator of success.

Table 9

*Code Frequencies*

Empathy and Engagement	43
Motivation for Job	40
Meaning in Work	34
Success	36
Working With Youth	41

**Comparing to the literature.** Due to the dearth of literature on the theme of empathy, motivation, and meaning in the workplace, there is not much room for comparison between the literature and the codes of empathy, and meaning in work. Success was not included in the literature review; it was a question that was designed to elicit positive reflections from the JJOs amid the many questions about sources of stress. The code for empathy was combined with engagement because the descriptions of these topics in the excerpts completely overlapped: Engagement with the job meant feeling empathy for the youth. As described in the literature, empathy required cognitive perspective taking about the lives of the youth before they came into the jail to be able to better judge their behaviors and support them. The level of “Engagement and Empathy” was continually evidenced in the way the JJOs understood the myriad social and environmental stressors that lead these youth to crime and incarceration; this understanding seemed to inspire a dedication to try to help by being role models, talking, and listening, and by recognizing what could be achieved within the jail.

The JJOs’ expectations for rehabilitating the youth were appropriately matched to the limitations of the system and the conditions of the lives of these youths and did not seem to inhibit feeling meaning about what could be achieved. A core motivation to help the youth seemed important for these JJOs; they feel the significance of this responsibility. This description of the feeling of meaning and success in empathy with youth could be an important buffer against stress, as stated in the study mentioned in the literature review, which showed that quality relationships with inmates were a buffer against stress.



Notably absent in the description of coping and resources were feelings of coworker support. There was a baseline expectation that support was present when coworkers had to manage an incidence of violence among the youth—but there was not a reported feeling of camaraderie, shared values, or true support. This is described below.

**Coworker Support**

Years of Experience in San Mateo: 3

I think the original question about cooperation with your coworkers, I think we all kind of assume, like understand that we all have each other's backs. I don't know if that's real. I know I assume it in my mind. I don't know if I fully believe it myself. I don't know... I think we all kind of assume, you know, maybe we're not friends or not buddies outside of work, but I think people kind of respect each other. We're all humans, and we don't want each other to be hurt. We have families.

**Quantitative Analysis**

The quantitative results from the 36 survey respondents show below-average levels of burnout, and over 75% of respondents also feel a sense of personal accomplishment, or compassion satisfaction. The empathy scores show empathic concern and perspective taking, but do not demonstrate the presence of personal distress. The demographic variables do not have any correlation with the presence or absence of workplace stress.

**Baseline Demographics**

The demographics describe the population through the 36 respondents who returned their surveys; no surveys were done during the focus groups. The separation of these groups, the focus group respondents and the survey respondents, could represent different groups of JJOs within the institution. These JJOs have firm roots in the job and are mid-career, established in their families as well as in their job positions. The most salient finding is that 75% plan to stay at the job for at least 10 more years; for many, this means until retirement. Despite whatever complaints or difficulties they may have, this is a group of workers who plan to stay in this job. This projected job commitment makes the project of understanding and hopefully supporting these staff especially important.

Table 10  
*Demographics*

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Average Age	39
Married	47%
Divorced	11%
Child in the Home	41%
>4 years on the Job	98%
>8 years on the Job	52%
Staying 10 years or more	75%

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Analysis for the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) subscales was calculated to show mean scores for the subscales. The mean responses are below average for emotional exhaustion and cynicism, and above average in feelings of personal accomplishment.

However, the large range and standard deviations show that among this small sample there was a good deal of variability.

In 1981 the MBI manual, the published standard mean score for emotional exhaustion is between 16 –17; personal accomplishment is between 32 – 38, and cynicism is between 7 – 12( Maslach & Jackson, 1981). A comparison can be made with a subsample of 99 JJOs in a study with correctional officers in a private youth facility (Griffin et al., 2012). Those JJOs were, on average, less emotionally exhausted than those in the current sample ( $M = 7$ ), and more depersonalized ( $M = 9$ ); they also had a smaller standard deviation of response for emotional exhaustion ( $SD = 3$ ). However the mean score of emotional exhaustion is already below average for the current sample, meaning that both groups reported below average emotional exhaustion. These differences, especially the standard deviation, can be partially explained by the small sample size of the current study.

Table 11

*Subscales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory*

<b>Sub Scale n=36</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Deviation</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Emotional Exhaustion	11	9	0	38
Personal Accomplishment	28	21	7	33
Cynicism	5	3	0	40

In Table 12 , the subscales are divided among the high, average, and low thirds of the MBI-Human Services Survey (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Through this analysis, we see more evidence of some of the stress that was described in the focus groups: 25% of the JJOs report high emotional exhaustion and 28% report average levels of emotional exhaustion; 25% have an average level of cynicism, and 8% feel high cynicism. The overall rates are still lower than the norm, although there is some evidence that there is a small group of workers who are struggling with exhaustion and cynicism. Consistent with the qualitative data on feelings of motivation and empathy, 75% of JJOs feel some level of accomplishment in their work.

Table 12

*Maslach Burnout Inventory Scores*

<b>Subscale High, Average, &amp; Low</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>N</b>
High Emotional Exhaustion	25%	9
Average Emotional Exhaustion	28%	11
Low Emotional Exhaustion	47%	16
High Personal Accomplishment	60%	21
Average Personal Accomplishment	25%	9
Low Personal Accomplishment	14%	6
High Cynicism	8%	3
Average Cynicism	25%	9
Low Cynicism	66%	24

The Professional Quality of Life, ProQol, survey “Compassion Satisfaction, Burnout, and Secondary Traumatic Stress” comes with published averages for human service workers (displayed in Table 13 below) ( Adams, Boscarino & Figley, 2006). The JJOs’ Compassion Satisfaction, PQ\_CS, scores fall within the average, although there is a large range; even the lowest level of Compassion Satisfaction is

still not below average. Higher scores on this scale represent a greater satisfaction related to one’s ability to be an effective caregiver in one’s job. This fits with the feelings of personal accomplishment displayed above in the evaluation of personal accomplishment with the MBI.

The JJOs’ Burnout, PQ\_BO, subscale falls below average and again has a very large range of responses. However, the highest scores among JJOs are still within the average range for the ProQol; this also fits with the MBI scores of low and average emotional exhaustion and cynicism. The Secondary Traumatic Stress, PQ\_STS, subscale is also below average, with a wide range of responses; however, the highest JJO score is still within the average range. This suggests that these JJOs do not suffer from feelings of secondary traumatic stress as a result of working with the youth.

**Interpersonal Reactivity Index, The Empathy Scale**

In the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) subscales, there is also a pattern of average or below-average scores compared to the published averages among age-matched professionals in a non-human service setting. The Fantasy Scale score is below the average, Perspective Taking is also just below average, Empathic Concern is average, and Personal Distress is significantly below average. This empathy scale is not designed for human service care providers and does not take into account the work conditions of JJOs. This scale was included because it is the gold standard for the evaluation of empathy; however, it has clear limitations for application in this setting. The survey questions ask about exposure to sympathetic distress as though it were an uncommon phenomenon, instead of part of the everyday job role of working in corrections with aggressive and depressed youth. Predictably, the personal distress score is low, in line with the low secondary traumatic stress levels from the ProQol. The closest approximations of motivation and cognitive appraisal on this scale are Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking; these are both average.

Table 13

*ProQol and IRI Scores*

N=36	PQ_CS	PQ_BO	PQ_STS	IRI_FS	IRI_PT	IRI_EC	IRI_PD
Published Average	23-41	23-41	23-41	17	17	20	10
Mean	37.1	20.02	18.08	11.94	20.27	19.69	5.47
Std. Dev	6.43	5.9	4.89	4.64	4.52	3.37	3.5
Range	25	22	25	21	16	14	16
Minimum	24	9	3	3	12	13	0
Maximum	49	31	28	24	28	27	16

A series of multiple regressions were run to explore relationships between demographic characteristics (including age, length of time on the job, number of kids in the home, marital status, and dependent variables of interest) and all subscales of burnout, the compassion satisfaction and secondary traumatic stress from the ProQol, and personal distress and empathic concern from the IRI. Results revealed no significant relationships among independent and dependent variables of interest. A lack of relationship of demographic variables and personal characteristics with measures of workplace stress has been well documented; however, there are contradictory findings that suggest that years on the job and family life may influence stress; hence, the analysis was run to check (Gerstein et al., 1987; Griffin et al., 2012).

### **Summary of Analysis**

This study fills a current gap in the literature on a group of understudied human service care providers, JJOs, and provides preliminary baseline data about their stressors and stress as well as their responses to stress.

The qualitative findings provided insights about the prevalence of stress arising from workplace hierarchy, which was the predominate stressor, followed by lack of communication and coworker stress. The next phase of the study, the development of the pilot training, focused on developing skills at the personal (not organizational) level and touched upon how to address lack of communication and coworker stress. The qualitative analysis of meaning, empathy, success, and motivation suggests that there is indeed a core motivation to help the youth and that a feeling of responsibility to these youth can help the workers feel meaning. The success, meaning, and motivation codes overlapped with the one for connection with youth, suggesting that building relationships and empathy is an important part of the job. Sustaining these core motivations, and thereby meaning, through developing skills for empathy was another important focus of the pilot training.

There is a bit of discrepancy between the stress expressed in the qualitative data and the relatively low level of stress captured in the quantitative measures. Although more than half the population of JJOs had average or below average levels of emotional exhaustion and cynicism, I would have predicted higher rates from the way the JJOs who participated in the focus group described their levels of stress. One possible explanation is that the eleven JJOs who participated in the focus groups may actually be distinct from the 36 JJOs who completed surveys; they may have had higher levels of burnout which led them to want to participate in the focus groups. I am not able to assess the difference between surveys from JJOs who participated in the focus groups from the overall group who took surveys. This is a compelling finding with myriad opportunities for interpretation. The majority of studies that have evaluated burnout among correctional officers have only used survey instruments and have not included qualitative responses, so it is hard to discern if this discrepancy between expressed stress and quantitative stress level could be a common occurrence. These prior studies were often quite large, with over 300 participants, and have shown significant levels of burnout but the Griffin study did not. With larger samples, there is more likely to be a wider range of reported burnout. Many larger studies often did not report subscales, but instead

compiled a composite average burnout score to relate to other job characteristics ,such as social support or job role issues. Subscales and mean scores were both in my analysis, neither of which demonstrated above average levels of burnout.

Another interpretation suggested in the correctional research literature is that JJOs' cynicism makes them suspicious of how the hardcopy surveys might be used against them by management, even though the surveys were anonymous and confidential they were handed out by management. This might have influenced JJOs to not report authentic levels of stress for fear of reprisal. However, this explanation poses an interesting question: Why did those who contributed in the focus groups and during participant observation not feel concerned that they would be held accountable for freely sharing concerns and stress? It is possible that JJOs felt that talking with an outside researcher during the qualitative data collection was a safer, more confidential forum for their thoughts than written surveys. Written surveys may have felt like hard evidence; the physical survey packets were distributed and collected by the management, whereas the participation in the group was led by me in a confidential setting, and I did not collect names. The code frequency analysis demonstrated that it was not simply one or two voices that described feeling stress; there were codes about stressors spread across every participant.

An important uniquely qualitative finding comes from incorporating meaning, empathy, success, and motivation. Qualitatively, these JJOs describe feeling a great deal of stress from the work structure; however, they still feel they can make a difference, which translates into being able to find some sense of meaning in their work, especially in relation to their interaction with the youth. This observation may be important to understanding how, despite expressing stressors and stress, the quantitative evaluation shows that a majority of workers are not overly emotionally exhausted or cynical, and they feel high levels of personal accomplishment. A new scale to explore those factors of work related to empathy and meaning could be an important next step to understanding the sustained feelings of personal accomplishment.

Using mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative measures creates opportunities for meaningful comparisons and importantly includes the research subject's point of view (Wisdom & Creswell, 2013). When quantitative data do not perfectly overlap with what is captured in qualitative data, as in this study, more data is needed from both methodologies with equivalent populations.

Chapter Four will cover phase three, the targeted development of a pilot training study to address the stressors and responses stated here and evaluate the basic feasibility of such a training.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF PILOT TRAINING

### Chapter Overview

This chapter traces the development, delivery, and evaluation of a pilot stress management training intended to Develop and Reconnect to Empathy And Meaning (DREAM) targeted to the unique needs of JJOs. The curriculum development was initially informed by the combined expertise of two trainers in emotion regulation and mindfulness practices, Chris McKenna and myself. I have been teaching Cultivating Emotional Balance (CEB), an evidence-based emotion regulation and mindfulness training, for the last four years. McKenna has been teaching mindfulness skills to incarcerated youth in various counties across California (including the case study site) for the past seven years. He had, however, never provided training for the JJOs. To build the curriculum, we considered the key observations about stressors and opportunities for empathy and meaning from phase one and two, our combined training experiences, and relevant training literature related to JJOs as well as stress management. The curriculum was then delivered and evaluated for basic feasibility with the case study population of JJOs.

Given the salience of interpersonal stressors documented in Chapters 1 and Chapter 3, we developed a person-centered approach that focuses on building skills to manage such stressors (relationship-based stress at work, such as stress between coworkers, with higher-ups, or with youth), as well as intrapersonal stressors (internal conflict, the stress of self-appraisal). A key goal of this person-centered intervention is to (re)connect workers to their core motivations to provide support and be a role model for the youth they work with, to encourage professional empathy, and to foster opportunities for finding meaning about this work.

The DREAM skills fall under four learning objectives designed to address the following interpersonal and intrapersonal stressors: ambiguous and conflicting job role expectations, lack of communication, and coworker stress, all of which impact the felt experience of cynicism. The four learning objectives for this training are as follows. The first objective is to build capacity for emotion regulation through identification of facial expressions and micro expressions of emotion and through familiarization of physical sensations of emotion in the body (emotional regulation). The second is to teach participants mindfulness exercises in order to facilitate connection to motivation and finding meaning in work, the development of self-compassion and compassion for others, and to enhance awareness through attention to breathing (mindfulness exercises). The third learning objective was to directly educate participants about the underlying psychology principles of burnout, including depersonalization, cynicism, genuine happiness and meaning, and the functions of emotion (psycho-education). Finally, it sought to develop empathic communication skills through rehearsal of empathic listening and empathic speaking through role-play with case study vignettes (communication skills). Results from data collected through focus groups, observations, and online

evaluations are presented and indicate that participants were satisfied with the training. In addition, participants showed improvements in self-reported stress levels and mindfulness.

### **Juvenile Justice Officer Needs**

JJOs are required to attend annual trainings that focus on how to respond to physical assault, identify gang tattoos, and accurately complete ever-changing documentation forms. But JJOs are not trained to identify or manage the emotional exhaustion and stress that arise from working with troubled youth within the Juvenile Justice System (Curtis, et al., 1990).

Given that very little is known about the types of stress and coping among this population, phase one and two of this study focused on understanding the nature of stressors, stress response, and coping among JJOs. The principal stressors were **work structure and hierarchy, lack of communication, coworker-related stress, frontline work stress, and role expectations**.

It is important to note that this intervention does not address systemic and organizational obstacles experienced by workers—including poor responsiveness to worker concerns from high-level management or lack of rewards for doing rehabilitative work with the youth as described **in work structure and hierarchy**, or the physical demands of a locked environment and schedule that rotates every six months as described in **frontline work stress**. Addressing these issues would require other kinds of job interventions and institutional change.

Rather, this pilot training intervention is intended to target person-centered skills that may address **lack of communication, coworker-related stress, role expectations**, and the felt response to stressors: **cynicism**. Although results from prior phases of this study suggest these are salient, they have not been a focus of intervention efforts to date. Moreover, addressing these stressors and experiences of stress requires the development of specific knowledge and skills related to emotion regulation, mindfulness exercises, psycho-education, and communication.

Findings from analysis of focus group responses related to empathy and engagement, motivation for job, and meaning in work provided additional data to shape the pilot training. Results from Chapter 3 showed that each JJO was motivated to begin the job in order to “help youth” in one fashion or another, and that interaction with the youth is still an important part of how they view their work. The intrinsic motivation that brought these JJOs to their work was thus capitalized on in structuring the training. Specifically, the training was designed to provide support for this motivation and to help foster meaning within the limitations of their job. Supporting the motivation was coupled with building skills to manage the key experienced stressors.

### **Literature on Interventions**

Data collected in earlier phases of the dissertation provided the basis for the learning objectives in the areas of emotion regulation, mindfulness, psycho-education, and communication. In addition, literature was reviewed on the delivery of interventions in other correctional settings, and on interventions for workplace stress as related to the learning objectives.

As discussed throughout this study, relatively little is known about the sources of workplace stress within criminal justice fields. And, perhaps not

surprisingly, even less is known about training interventions to manage stress for this population (Lopez & Russell, 2008). Results from previous stress training interventions funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) are reviewed in the next section. This review highlights the importance of including correctional staff input and building specific skills to cope with the psychological impacts of stress. The workplace stress intervention literature will then be reviewed to provide background and lead into a review of JJOs' stressors and meaning from Chapter Three. The specific evidence-based practices that informed the curriculum will conclude the literature review. Each of these literatures informed the intervention and study design.

### **National Institute of Justice Interventions**

In 2000, the National Institute of Justice funded a series of stress-reduction programs to address concern about research documenting the rising levels of correctional officer stress (NIJ, 2005). Correctional officer stress is associated with physical and mental health issues that lead to burnout, absenteeism, and mental health disability (Lambert, Altheimer, & Hogan, 2010). The NIJ funded the development of stress-reduction programs in criminal justice facilities across 11 states including mostly adult and some juvenile facilities. There were no uniform expectations for what was to be covered in the trainings. In most cases, the facilities contracted with professional local trainers to bring in pre-existing stress-management programs. Other programs were designed in-house by the institutional management. All of these funded stress reduction programs were evaluated by an external agency, Abt Associates (2004). The Abt evaluation provides invaluable reflections about how correctional staff felt about the programs, and thus provides useful clues for the development and delivery of the DREAM pilot intervention.

Results of the Abt evaluation suggested that these programs were largely unsuccessful with correctional officers. Most fundamentally, correctional officers did not feel the stress-reduction training programs addressed their unique stressors and needs. Specifically, they expressed dissatisfaction with outside trainers who had little to no correctional experience. These outside trainers lacked an authentic understanding of the correctional setting, and failed to build trust and rapport with the staff (Abt Associates, 2004). The officers reported that they felt the content of the training did not build skills to manage psychological distress; instead, there was an overemphasis on physical wellness and "self-care" strategies concerning eating, smoking cessation, and exercise. One possible interpretation of this negative response to the health and behavior focus of stress training interventions is that although some workers may have benefitted from the information, the majority already knew the health risks of poor diet, smoking, and lack of exercise. Finding time to exercise, overcome nicotine addiction, and change unhealthy eating habits can feel like additional "to dos" on an already-long list of tasks assigned to these overburdened correctional officers (Edwards et al., 2000).

Another interpretation of the negative feedback from officers is that these trainings were not well-matched to the unique stresses, needs, and motivations of JJOs, such as those that were explored in prior phases of this study. Additionally, a number of training programs tried to build social support for workers by including



their families in social activities. This was felt to be an undesired burden upon correctional officers' limited free time. Officers expressed that they did not want to mix family and work life. Because correctional officers were not offered compensated work time to attend voluntary trainings, these trainings suffered from high attrition rates; officers did not want to spend their limited free time at work. In sum, these trainings were designed and delivered without taking into account correctional officer input, and so they did not always appear to meet the needs of the correctional officers. In short, the Abt evaluation provides important lessons, most of which serve as warnings about what not to do when developing stress-reduction trainings for this population.

The design of this case study intervention was thus purposively built on a specific understanding of the Juvenile Justice setting from the phase one and two data presented in Chapters One and Three. The findings helped shaped the content and delivery of the training and provided the opportunity for the trainer to build some credibility and respect prior to the training. In order to respect the limited free time of JJOs, the training was designed with collaborative institutional support to allow JJOs to attend the training during their normal work shift with coverage provided. The State Department of Juvenile Corrections also approved the training so that JJOs who participated could receive credits toward their annual training requirements.

### **Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Interventions**

The workplace stress intervention literature also provided an important source of information that guided the development of the training. Interventions in the workplace can be classified using a three-level model: The primary level is preventative and proactive, the secondary level is ameliorative, and the tertiary level is reactive. The primary level considers what kind of factors may lead to job stress and takes measures to reduce these factors through job design. Such an approach can also be thought of as a stress-inoculation model. Importantly, such an approach can be undesirable for organizations because they require resource investment without an explicit identified need (LaMontagne, Keegel, Louie, Ostry, & Landsbergis, 2007). The secondary level is ameliorative. It follows an identification of work stress issues within the organization and provides psycho-education trainings or other targeted interventions related specifically to identified needs. The tertiary level is reactive intervention; this occurs once stress has already impacted the lives of workers, preventing them from working due to physical or psychological illness. Workers thus require rehabilitation in order to return to work (LaMontagne et al., 2007).

The extent and the degree to which any or all of these levels are implemented can be influenced by internal organizational factors as well as legislation on the national level, though national-level policy is more common in Europe and Japan than in the United States (Schnall, Dobson, Roskam, & Landsbergis, 2009). Ideally, organizations would intervene at all three levels: primary trainings to help workers develop good skills and habits to prepare for stress, secondary interventions providing ongoing support throughout employment, and tertiary interventions following a stress-related collapse. Stress can sometimes only become visible to the

employer at the tertiary level, but a tertiary response may come too late to recover a good worker.

**Organizational-level interventions for workplace stress.** The study of sources of workplace stress has received significantly more scholarly attention than the study of actual interventions that could help prevent or treat the stress with coping strategies (Edwards et al., 2000). The most significant research on interventions for work stress has been at a macro-organizational level, with a focus on providing basic safety assurances. For example, the United States Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) have implemented limited legislation aimed at reducing work-related stress through primary-level preventative measures, such as limiting extreme work hours, promoting workplace ergonomics, and passing the Family Leave Act, which allows employees to take leave when there is an important event in family life (Schnall et al., 2009).

**Person-centered approaches to work stress.** The basic premise of helping workers manage workplace stress at an individual level hinges on the stress appraisal model described in Chapter One (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Applying this model to the workplace would lead one to examine the worker’s appraisals of workplace demands in relation to the worker’s perceived resources. There is an important difference between challenge-based stress, which functionally helps workers rally psychological and physiological resources to manage difficult situations, and threat-based stress, which limits workers’ response flexibility and puts them into a fight, flight, or freeze mode. The key to changing the response in these situations is to change an individual-level appraisal of the work environment. The development of this case study pilot training focuses on teaching person-centered (emotion regulation, mindfulness and communication) skills that can be used to build individual-level resources.

### DREAM Training Development

Based on results from prior phases one and two of the study and the literature reviewed above, this section documents the specific components of the curriculum. It is organized by the primary learning objectives and skills that were proposed earlier: emotion regulation, mindfulness, psycho-education, and communication. It is important to note that the learning objectives and skills do not constitute completely independent modules. The objectives and skills are cumulative and have important areas of overlap. In addition, the Tables below show the specific stressors, stress and stress responses identified in prior study phases compared to each learning objective.

#### Emotion Regulation

Table 14.  
*Emotion Regulation Skills and Areas of Need*

Emotion Regulation Skills Taught	Areas of JJO Need					
	Job Role	Difficult Coworker	Cynicism	Communication	Empathy	Meaning & Motivation
Identification of Facial Expression		X		X	X	
Feeling of Emotion in			X		X	

the Body			
Timeline of Emotion	X	X	X

Emotion regulation, as described in Chapter One, is how we manage our cognitive appraisals and expressed behaviors during the timeline of an emotional response (Gross, 2002; Gross & Levenson, 1997). Even though the physiological and subjective felt experience of an emotion occur in less than a second, the emotion timeline has distinct stages: appraisal, felt experience, and behavioral response. Building skills of emotion regulation requires becoming aware of the timeline of emotion and building a familiarization with the felt and displayed expressions of emotions in self and others (Kemeney et al., 2012; Saxbe, Yang, Borofsky, & Immordino-Yang, 2013.) Building emotion regulation skills can help to manage the over-aroused emotional response that leads to stress (Lazarus 1966; Mendes et al., 2003). This learning objective was included to meet the JJOs’ areas of need because emotion-regulation skills are an implicit part of stress management skills. Emotion regulation includes building emotion awareness to identify emotions and emotional resonance before it feels overwhelming. Emotion regulation skills also help enhance the ability to read and interpret emotional communication signals, which could improve overall communication, coworker interactions, and empathy.

As mentioned earlier, I have been a teacher of the evidence-based Cultivating Emotional Balance (CEB) training for the last four years (Kemeney et al., 2012). Cultivating Emotional Balance is a 42-hour secular emotion and mindfulness skills training designed to help participants improve emotional life through the cultivation of constructive emotional experiences, decrease destructive emotional experiences, and develop mental balance. The training consists of overarching conceptual knowledge and experiential exercises drawn from Western scientific research on emotions and traditional Eastern attention-focus (Shamata) and contemplative (Four Immeasurables) practices.

CEB is designed to provide useful skills for individual development and interpersonal communication across non-clinical populations. CEB encourages participants to set their aspirations for exceptional mental health (genuine happiness) through attentional, emotional, cognitive, and conative balances. CEB specifically builds skills for interpersonal communication through the development of emotional self-awareness and the ability to identify emotion in others.

The efficacy of CEB has been evaluated through a randomized controlled trial of schoolteachers. The CEB curriculum was found to reduce trait negative affect, rumination, and depression and increase trait positive affect and mindfulness (Kemeney et al., 2012). CEB’s unique combination of building emotion regulation and mindfulness skills was well-matched to meet the learning objectives of the pilot training. However, it needed to be adapted from its original 42-hour format, which was not feasible in the juvenile justice setting. Moreover, it does not directly focus on meaning or empathy.

**Skills: micro expression training for identifying facial expression of emotion.** The skills taken from CEB for the DREAM training are the emotion

regulation skills. The Micro Expression Training Tool (METT) is an online software program developed by Paul Ekman that trains users to identify micro expressions of emotion in the face (Ekman, 2002). METT presents images of a variety of faces making seven universal expressions of emotion at a very fast speed. I guided the JJOs through the basic identification of emotions and the micro expression of emotions; they did pre- and post-practice evaluations to track their own learning. Learning to read facial expressions of emotion was intended to aid them in understanding difficult coworkers, improve communication with youth and coworkers, and pick up on emotional cues to inform empathic response.

**Skills: somatic emotion exercise to feel emotion in the body.** To teach JJOs how emotions are experienced in the body, I instructed them to do two types of exercises that involve experiencing an emotion. The first accesses the emotion through remembering an emotional event, and the second accesses the emotion through practicing the facial expression of the emotion with a hand-held mirror. Immediately following the memory, and then the facial exercise, the JJOs were instructed to identify and write down where they felt the emotion in their body. The two emotions that were practiced were anger and fear, as they are emotions that are common sources of difficulty. Practicing feeling the emotions as they arise in the body can help manage cynicism and promote empathy by providing clues about an emotional experience before it becomes over-aroused. See Appendix D for Training materials.

**Skills : a personal and reflective emotion timeline about a stressful emotion experience in the workplace.** The timeline of emotion is a worksheet that details the phases of an emotional episode: Pre Episode, Appraisal, Experience, Behavior, and Post Episode. The emotion timeline exercise asks dyads to create a timeline of an emotional episode and then subsequently come back together as a group to discuss the timelines.

The timeline of the emotion is another personal self-reflective tool that provides an opportunity to consider difficult and stressful experiences to aid in alleviating cynicism and improve future communication. The timeline exercise requires the JJO to consider their motivation to understand their emotional responses (Ekman, 2007)

Further emotion-based skills from CEB are discussed in the psycho-education section concerning the underlying psychological perspective on the function of emotion.

### Mindfulness Exercises

Table 15.  
*Mindfulness Skills and Areas of Need*

Mindfulness Skills Taught	Areas of JJO Need					
	Job Role	Difficult Coworker	Cynicism	Communication	Empathy	Meaning & Motivation
Anchoring the Breath in the Body			X	X		
Many Moments of			X		X	

Awareness					
Setting the Motivation	X	X		X	X
Self-Compassion	X	X			
Compassion for Others		X	X	X	X

Mindfulness-based trainings have been at the forefront of stress reduction interventions and wellness in the last decade (Keng, Smoski, & Robins, 2011; Goyal et al., 2014). Mindfulness meditation practices with veterans; clinical populations with depression, anxiety, and chronic pain; medical providers; and school-aged children have demonstrated a variety of beneficial effects (Goyal et al., 2014). Specifically, mindfulness practices have been found to reduce stress, depression, and anxiety, and to increase activation in brain regions responsible for regulating attention and positive affective states, including empathy and other pro-social emotions (Davidson et al., 2003; Lutz, Slagter, Dunne, & Davidson, 2008; Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004; Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, & Oh, 2010). The learning objective of mindfulness was included in this study to meet the JJOs' need for relaxation and reframing to promote meaning and empathy as a way to manage feelings of cynicism.

There are many specific techniques and skills that are taught as part of mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness-based programs build on the core premise that mindfulness teaches participants skills to create a space of reflection between their thoughts and their mind (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). One of the most basic and widely used techniques is a focus on breath for attention and relaxation. In this technique, participants learn to pay attention to the present moment without judgment through a focus on their breath and/or their body to relax (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). Regular breath practice trains the mind to develop an everyday awareness of habitual patterns of negative self-thoughts and behavior, referred to as meta-cognitive awareness (Davidson & McEwen, 2012; Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999; Keng et al., 2011). Simple breath practices are believed to help bring the attention of the mind to the present moment instead of letting the mind ruminate in negative or cynical thoughts. Such a reorientation also helps bring a clearer focus on the present moment.

Another mindfulness meditation technique is setting a clear intention through mindfulness practices. The intention should connect to a person's meaningful life aspirations. Human service workers, for example, can use this intention practice to connect (or reconnect) to the intrinsic rewards of altruism and being of service. Setting the intention in this training was used to help bolster JJOs' reported initial motivation to "help kids." Practicing the skill of connecting to the core altruistic motivation to be of service could clarify job expectations, mitigate cynicism, and encourage empathy with youth.

Also under the umbrella of mindfulness meditation is compassion focus trainings to develop skills for kind attention to self and others. Compassion practices are delivered through a guided visualization during a sitting meditation practice that focuses on an aspiration (for self or other) to be free from suffering and

the causes of suffering. Self-compassion practices help with self-soothing during difficulties and bolster feelings of efficacy and resilience (Gilbert & Irons, 2005; Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007). Compassion for others extends these feelings of kind attention to the suffering and struggles of others, including clients and coworkers. In this case, such a stance of compassion helps to provide an avenue of care and concern for a youth even when the JJO is unable to actually intervene. Compassion-focused trainings with care providers start by practicing compassion for the self, then move on to practicing compassion for the clients who are suffering (Klimecki et al., 2012; Neff et al., 2007; Shapiro, Brown, Thoresen, & Plante, 2011). For the DREAM training, self-compassion and then compassion for others were both taught.

**Skills, anchoring the breath in the body and many moments of awareness.** “Anchoring the breath in the body” and “many moments of awareness” were taught by Chris McKenna as the primary tools for developing attention and relaxation. The JJOs were asked to sit or lie on mats on the floor with their eyes closed, and were guided in 15 minutes of meditation aimed at relaxing the mind through focused attention on the breath and relaxation in the body. This technique is then taught in shorter increments, a one- to four-minute re-centering performed by closing the eyes and again focusing on the breath in the body. In the DREAM training, these techniques were taught to help JJOs manage the experience of cynicism through feeling relaxation when they begin to get overwhelmed by emotions and feelings of stress. This relaxation is targeted to help JJOs feel more attentive to any situations that arise, which could improve communication and empathy.

**Skills, setting the intention.** Chris McKenna also taught JJOs about setting the intention. The JJOs were asked to sit or lie on mats on the floor with their eyes closed for 15 minutes of guided meditation in order to remember their initial motivation to start work with troubled youth. The practice encouraged JJOs to reflect on the value of their work. Sustaining a clear intention supports feelings of meaning through difficult work.

**Skills, compassion for self and others.** Chris McKenna taught compassion meditations. Both meditations were taught with JJOs sitting or lying on mats on the floor with their eyes closed for 15-minute sessions. For the compassion meditation directed toward the self, the JJOs were guided to consider their own struggles, suffering, and discomforts in the job and at home. They were then guided to imagine this suffering to be lifted from them. This same set-up was done for compassion toward the youth and coworkers, except the focus in the guided practice was directed to feeling compassion for the suffering, struggles, and discomforts of the youth and coworkers, and imagining them free from these burdens.

Self-compassion was intended to help ease tension on the job and reduce cynicism through kind attention to the self. Compassion for others can also help with reducing cynicism, mitigating negative feelings toward coworkers, and facilitating a more considerate approach to communication and empathy that could support feeling more meaning. Compassion for self and others was thought to be a

particularly useful tool for JJOs who struggle to feel that they are making a difference and can feel stressed out by seeing the recidivism and bad outcomes of the youth.

### Psycho-education

Table 16.  
*Psycho-education Skills and Areas of Need*

Psycho-education Skills Taught	Areas of JJO Need					
	Job Role	Difficult Coworker	Cynicism	Communication	Empathy	Meaning & Motivation
Burnout & Depersonalization Education	X	X	X			
Genuine Happiness & Meaning Education					X	X
Function of Emotion			X	X		

Psychological education, or psycho-education, is a therapeutic intervention of providing information that has been demonstrated to be helpful for clinical and non-clinical populations. Psycho-education is provided either through passive materials (flyers and handouts) or in a teaching format (a live instruction), and covers issues such as depression, drinking, stress and more psychological and behavioral topics (Donker, Griffiths, Cuijpers & Christensen, 2009). Psycho-education about workplace stress has been effective among human service care providers (Kagan & Watson, 1995). There are many elements of psycho-education woven throughout the training when skills were being taught, such as compassion meditation or empathic communication. However, specific topics of ‘Burnout’, ‘Genuine Happiness’ and the ‘Function of Emotion’ were delivered to provide a working understanding (no skills taught) of the underlying mechanisms of these topics. Educating training participants about the scientific basis of the training helps to encourage buy-in and investment (Kravits, McAllister-Black, Grant, & Kirk, 2010).

**Skills, psycho=education on burnout and depersonalization.** JJOs were taught about burnout and depersonalization using a lecture and discussion format. I presented a lecture with PowerPoint slides on the nature of stress, how it arises from feeling overwhelmed by emotion, and how individual appraisal of resources and demands in the workplace can influence this process. I encouraged JJOs to ask questions and give examples from their own experience. I then presented the findings of Phillip Zimbardo’s prison experiment to describe the extreme experience of depersonalization and dehumanization (Zimbardo, 2007; Zimbardo, Ebbesen & Maslach, 1977). The stress and emotion information helps to clarify job role expectations and foster an understanding of shared experiences of cynicism and negativity toward coworkers.

**Skills, psycho-education on genuine happiness and meaning.** Chris McKenna and I co-presented on the scientific research about happiness and well-being. With a prepared lecture and PowerPoint slides, we presented content from positive psychology that described research on causes of genuine happiness, including relationship-building, altruism, and meaning in life and work (Keltner, 2009;

Wallace & Shaprio, 2006). The genuine happiness education promotes a focus on genuine sources of intrinsic reward, such as empathy and meaning.

**Skills, psycho-education on the function of emotion.** I provided the psycho-education on the evolutionary psychology approach to emotion. This included a prepared lecture on the seven universal expressions of emotion, the characteristics of emotion, and the function and dysfunction of emotion. Discussion and questions from the JJOs were welcomed. This knowledge fit well with the timeline of emotion exercise from the emotion-regulation skills training. Building knowledge about emotions was intended to aid JJOs in managing emotional experiences, with an aim towards reducing experienced stress and cynicism.

### Communication Skills

Table 17.  
*Communication Skills and Areas of Need*

Communication Skills Taught	Areas of JJO Need					
	Job Role	Difficult Coworker	Cynicism	Communication	Empathy	Meaning & Motivation
Empathic Listening & Honestly Expressing		X	X	X	X	
Vignettes with Youth and Coworker		X	X	X	X	

Meaningful communication requires skills of empathic listening, empathic speaking, and honestly expressing and understanding the perspective of the person communicating (Halpern, 2003). Developing these communication skills also functions to build skills of empathy through the accurate identification of the communicated emotions, as well as the practice of considering the context of the emotional experience (Eisenberg, 2000). This empathic attunement can help providers set healthy emotional boundaries between the emotional experience of coworkers or clients and the self (Halpern, 2007). The empathy training included in the pilot was built from the emotion-regulation skills of identification of emotion, expression in the self and others, and the creation of vignettes that were role-played by the JJOs. Role-play vignettes developed from case study examples have frequently been used to teach empathy to medical professionals. Role-playing with patient actors is used in many training programs to train and evaluate the interpersonal skills of medical students. These vignettes create an opportunity to practice empathic listening and communication, and to explore challenging emotional responses (Fine & Therrien, 1977). These skills target cynicism and coworker stress through building more in-depth empathic consideration.

**Skills, empathic listening and honestly expressing.** To teach the skills of empathic listening and honestly expressing there is a three-part exercise. It begins with the teaching tool to apply to a recent emotional event: Recognize, Allow, Investigate, and Non-Identify (R.A.I.N) as a template for the understanding of what our emotion responses are telling us. Building on this information about our emotional responses, the second part of the exercise is to prompt dyadic pairs to switch turns in empathic listening and honestly expressing their feelings about a



recent stressful event. For empathic listening, the instruction is to focus on the speaker’s observations, feelings, needs and requests. The third exercise is to then express, or speak honestly with a focus on the same qualities for self-oriented observation, feelings, needs and requests.

**Skills, vignettes with youth and coworkers.** I implemented a vignette practice that consisted of two case study type examples of difficult situations that could take place in the JJO workplace. The JJOs role-played these situations in dyads, practicing the skills of empathic listening and honestly expressing, which they had just learned. One situation involved talking to a coworker who had trouble at home and was not doing their job well, and the other talking with a youth who was well known to the JJO and was acting out. Both examples were based on stories and observations collected in phases one and two. After the role-play, there was a group discussion about using the skills of empathic listening and honestly expressing to role-play these vignettes. This practice provided a concrete opportunity to try new skills of communication and exercise empathy for the youth and coworkers.

**Trainers**

In consideration of the Abt findings about the desire for trainers with knowledge of the correctional experience, the trainers both had professional experience working with the Juvenile Justice System. I had clinical background that was helpful in managing emotional disclosure during the training, and a professional background working in emotionally demanding jobs as a social worker. As noted above, I have been leading Cultivating Emotional Balance trainings since 2001, and was very familiar with delivering the emotion-regulation skills training. McKenna has been providing mindfulness trainings to incarcerated youth since 2002. He was very familiar with working with this population, and with the stresses and strains of the Juvenile Justice System, and he has extensive experience as a teacher of mindfulness skills.

**Summary of Learning Objectives**

This is a summary table of the learning objectives developed for this training Table 8.

*Summary of Learning Objectives and Skills*

<b>Learning Objective</b>	<b>Skills Taught</b>
Emotion Regulation	Identification of facial expressions and micro expressions of emotion Familiarization with the physical sensations of emotion in the body Emotion timeline
Mindfulness exercises	Self-compassion, compassion for others, loving kindness Anchoring in the body and the breath Setting the intention, motivation and meaning Many moments of awareness
Psycho-education	Burnout, depersonalization Genuine happiness, meaning Function of emotion

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Communication Skills

Empathic listening, honestly expressing  
Case study vignettes of youth  
Case study vignettes of coworkers

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### **DREAM Delivery, Content, and Pacing**

The learning objectives and delivery of the curriculum included exercises and opportunities for coworker interaction, discussion, and peer support. Peer support has been identified as a useful tool for managing work-related stress and burnout. This peer-support model can potentially ameliorate some cynicism and coworker stress through healthy communication among coworkers (Peterson, Bergström, Samuelsson, Åsberg, & Nygren, 2008).

Within the limited hours that can be allocated by already busy staff, the program was condensed into two day-long trainings, two weeks apart, with daily homework to integrate the skills into everyday life. The training included guided meditation and instruction of content, including psycho-education, group discussion, and dyadic exercises. These exercises aimed to teach participants about stress, emotion, burnout, and empathy, and to help them practice emotional-awareness skills and a mindfulness and stress-reduction practice. Each training took an entire day (seven hours total, including one hour for lunch and two 15-minute breaks).

The first day of training introduced a general framework of understanding emotion, emotional skills, psycho-education of burnout, and mindfulness practices. A two-week break occurred between the first and second trainings to allow JJOs to practice their new skills at work and at home. The second training day encouraged them to reflect on their experiences of integrating these emotion skills and mindfulness practices during their two weeks off. The second day also included professional empathy, micro-expression training, and reconnection to meaning in the work. Role-play of case study style vignettes were used to develop professional empathy toward youth and coworkers. The mindfulness practice of intention was developed to help JJOs reconnect to their motivation for the work.

## **Analysis**

### **Field Notes on Implementation**

Field notes collected during the training demonstrated the basic feasibility of covering the materials in the given hours and maintaining the interest and attention of JJOs. JJOs readily volunteered to respond to questions from the facilitators, no participants left early or chose not to participate, and all participants contributed verbally to the discussions at some point during the training. Additionally, JJO investment in the training was demonstrated by their willingness to disclose personal information with their coworkers and facilitators about struggles in their experiences of stress at work and at home.

### **Focus Groups**

Below is data from the semi-structured focus groups that were held at the end of the second day of training to ask JJOs about skills that worked, how to improve the training, and their overall reflections. The responses are divided up

below to illustrate responses to these questions There is also an additional section presenting positive affirmation and satisfaction with the training.

**Skills that worked.** Overall, JJOs reported that the empathy training using vignettes, the mindfulness skills including breathing exercises, and the motivation exercises were especially helpful. The excerpts included below represent key points of feedback.

We can use the whole class in the everyday life, you can use the face training with coworkers and kids. (JJO#7)

Using vignettes to practice empathy skills resonated with the JJOs, especially when they focused on skills to use in communication with coworkers.

(I will ) Try to have more empathy to not blame the other person and use more I statements. (JJO #5)

JJOs stated that the “many moments of awareness” mindfulness exercises were skills they felt they could use to respond to everyday stress anytime:

The meditation can be really effective and useful, when not wanting to flash at work, if I can remember to use it. (JJO#6)

I know I did the breathing at work the other day. I was like, my adrenaline was up, and I went in the other room and just took a couple of deep breaths and closed my eyes and tried to forget the smell in the bathroom, but I like took a couple of deep breaths and tried to like relax. So I did that. And that helped a lot actually. So I think that's maybe what I'm getting from it. (JJO #4)

Using the data collected from phase two about the JJOs' motivation was a useful way to encourage them to consider their motivation and make the meditation practice of setting the intention feel authentic:

Having the motivation open up( start) the class made me open up to the class, and (focusing on motivation) as closer on the second day then I will also have an appreciation of why I did this class. (JJO#8)

**How to Improve the Training.** There were three primary suggestions for improving the training. These were: (1) Hold the trainings closer together; (2) Provide more materials to review between trainings and after the training; and (3) Include management, so that they can be part of the conversation about emotion, stress, and empathy. The excerpts included below illustrate these points more explicitly.

The scheduling was tough to organize with the department; the classes were two weeks apart, and this made it difficult for the participants to remember the lessons from day one to day two of training.

I would have liked to take the class back to back, Monday and Tuesday, because my memory is shot, having the two weeks makes it hard to remember, I remember the trigger stuff but forgot other things. (JJO#3)

There was a strong desire to have take-away materials to help support and remind JJOs of key skills they could practice from what they had learned. They are accustomed to using printed materials to guide their jobs, and this could be included in to their everyday procedures.

I want a worksheet to take with me, for people at a desk everyday for 8 hours it is much easier. When you are dealing with being at this place for so long, you need to do this more then one week, one week can be affected by anything. (JJO#6)

Almost every JJO who gave feedback stated they believed this training, or some version of it, should be shared with other staff and especially with management. This reflects a desire for building better communication and helping resolve some of the cynicism towards the work.

I think that would benefit the management, any kind of management. I think that would, to me, especially with the—trying to work with how we were saying like trying to find the core issue, their core problem with like being late or something like that. I think it would be easier or would be used more by a manager, being able to, you know, learn those skills. I think that would help them. (JJO#4)

It can be for everybody, this training is for everybody. Everybody can benefit from this. Okay, management might benefit a little more when it comes to like the empathy part, you know? They might be able—they might need that a little more than us, but it's beneficial to both parties. (JJO #6)

**Satisfaction, Positive Affirmation of Training.** The overall reaction from staff was very positive; they reported telling coworkers about the training and suggesting they take it. The training was felt to be appropriate for JJO needs, useful in reconnecting them to a sense of meaning and finding motivation, and could help prevent severe loss of meaning and frustration among highly distressed coworkers.

I've already told people, "This is good." You've got all of this stuff you're stressing over, and you go in there, and they teach you how to deal with all of the stress. You can actually use those techniques at work. And at home. (JJO #3)

The JJOs felt the training was designed for them and their needs, and this made them feel connected to the content.

Maybe we just have really shitty training classes, but this one was like pretty good. I mean, the bar is low, you know? I think it's because it's more for us. Usually all the other trainings is for like—it's job related, and you have to do this, and you have to learn CPR. You have to do defensive tactics, but it's not about us. (JJO #2)

They also confirmed that reconnecting to their initial motivation was beneficial to their connection to the work, and observed that this kind of training could prevent more serious stress-related “blow-outs” among staff.

So maybe even if this class was offered like once a year, just even like what you guys have done already, just reminding us of all the extra stresses we have and what we should be doing for ourselves. Do you know what I mean? Just getting that refresher once a year. I think for the first time of you guys doing this, I think it was really good. (JJO#8)

We were joking about it before the class. We said if more people had the training, we'd have less postal syndrome, coming in and shooting up the place and stuff like that to the next extreme level because that's at a point where they don't know any of us and they don't have nothing else to do. They're at the end of a line. You know, with the skills we have here, you know, you learn to cope with things. You don't go that far. You deal with it better. We focus on the options. (JJO#4)

Significantly, although coworker issues were frequently described as a source of stress in phase one data collection and brought up in discussions during the training, there were many instances of group support observed throughout the training. This emergent observation arose from reviewing the daylong training transcripts. Specifically, one JJO shared a deep sadness and concern about a female youth who had committed suicide on the unit. The JJO was visibly upset in discussing this story. He explained that he had had a good relationship with the youth and had seen her that morning; he had been stressed out and did not feel he was really focused on what she was saying. This story made the entire training room quiet, but before I could intervene to reflect on the story, another JJO started talking about how she or he? also experiences stress to try and be always present for the youth. Two more JJOs then chimed in and also shared this same concern and gave verbal support to the JJO who had initially shared the story, by saying “You can't pay attention to everything, there is too much happening.”

Another JJO shared being verbally threatened by a youth, who told the JJO he was going to find the JJO's daughter and rape her once he left the jail. The JJO was very angry and wanted to physically react or be able to punish the youth in some way, but he had to remain calm and simply do his job. His coworker, who worked on the same unit, said she was also very upset by this incident and expressed concern about the lack of consequence for this verbal abuse. Other JJOs shared and reflected on experiences of losing a sense of meaning in the work, and feeling exhausted and disconnected when coming home after work. These spontaneous expressions of

coworker support were an unanticipated benefit of the training. The training space created an arena for peer support

**Online Evaluation of Training.**

A total of nine out of 16 participants (56%) completed the online evaluation. The instructions for the statements below were: Please rate the extent to which you agree with the statements below about learning objectives: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree.

Table 19

*Online Evaluation of Training*

Online Evaluation Questions	Agree and Strongly Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree
I understand more about emotions and stress as a result of the training.	88%	22%
I can use the information and practices about professional empathy in my everyday work and home life.	100%	
I can use the information and practices about self-compassion in my everyday work and home life.	100%	
I learned meditation relaxation skills I can use in my everyday work and home life in the second day of training.	100%	
The online Micro Expression Training Tool will be useful in my everyday work and home life.	88%	22%
The training helped me reconnect to my motivation for doing the work I do.	55%	45%
I would recommend this training to other staff.	100%	
Free Text space	1) This was a great training class and I found it very informative.  2) Trainings are usually boring and I find myself not following along; this class was extremely different in that I wanted to learn what was being taught and will use it again in the workplace and my personal life.  3) Best class the department has ever offered!!!	

In summary, the responses from the online evaluations suggest that the participants learned from and found the skills beneficial, but were more

equivocal about whether the training allowed them to connect with their core motivation and meaning.

## **Conclusions**

The pilot delivery of the DREAM training generated important data on satisfaction and recommended areas for improvement that can be used as a guide for further development of this training. It is important to note that the case study pilot was small and exploratory, and requires further replication to assess in more depth the important areas for refinement of the training as well as its efficacy in developing knowledge and skills among JJOs.

Given these limitations, efforts to match the training to the needs and context of the juvenile justice training appeared to be successful. Training participants engaged with the training exercises and discussion. Such findings compare favorably to those obtained by the Abt evaluation of other interventions, which showed significant attrition in programming and suggested significant mismatch with worker needs (Abt Associates, 2004).

Responses to focus group prompts and online evaluations suggested an overall positive response to, as well as increased knowledge about, learning objectives and use of skills. Although the evidence collected does not enable discernment of the actual knowledge and skills gained as a result of participation in the training, JJOs reported that the most useful content and skill areas included identification of micro-expression of emotion, compassion exercises, anchoring breath in the body, psycho-education on burnout and stress, and training on professional empathy communication. The participatory group format, moreover, provided an unanticipated benefit of creating an opportunity for peers to socially support each other during discussions.

This training drew on JJOs' original sense of calling to the field—their initial altruistic motivation to help others. The opening and closing discussions about motivation and meaning in the job elicited descriptions of the personal reasons they are in the job—moving beyond consideration of the organizational mission statement to exploring their own “individual mission statements.” Some responses included wanting to help at any level possible, to grow personally, to provide financial security for their family, to give back to the youth, to encourage the youth to explore their self-worth, and to help kids feel worthy and prepare for a healthy adult life. Given these responses, it is important to note that online evaluation of meaning and motivation suggest that more development of this content may be warranted. Other suggestions for improving the training included scheduling the training days closer together (either holding them one week instead of two weeks apart, or even trying to do the training days back to back), providing handout materials for future reference, and offering the course to management so that all staff could be on the same page with communication skills.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

### **Reflections**

This case study explored stress, empathy, and meaning with an understudied population of Juvenile Justice Officers. The study was carried out with observation, focus groups, and surveys, and culminated in a pilot training. Reflecting iterative case study techniques, it drew upon both qualitative and quantitative methods as well as a sequential review of relevant literature. The intended contributions of this study were: (1) developing a descriptive baseline understanding of stress among an important and understudied population of human service care providers, (2) exploring human service care provider workplace stress through a new lens of empathy and meaning and (3) piloting a training to reduce stress with a focus on facilitating empathy and meaning.

This chapter will reflect on the case study findings for suggestions on improving the job role and workplace, evaluation of the key limitations of the study, and proposals for future directions for furthering this work. The suggestions that will be discussed fall under two main categories: (1) institutional based changes -- how to facilitate meaning among JJOs through increased connection with youth, improved coworker connections, and positive feedback from the institution; and (2) training topics to improve coping -- increasing skills in emotion regulation, mindfulness, and communication. Following a description of the specific limitations of the present study, recommendations to expand, replicate, and improve the current study design and pilot will also be discussed.

### **Suggestions for Better Practice**

This section will provide an overview of how the Juvenile Justice as an institution could support their workers

### **Opportunities and Challenges for Finding Meaning**

Finding meaning in human service jobs involves an alignment of personal values and objectives with the values of the job, coupled with feelings of personal efficacy (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). Workers drawn to human service jobs arrive with the motivation to help others, engage, and be empathic with clients (e.g., Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980; Noonan & Tennstedt, 1997). and this was evidenced by the focus group interviews with JJOs. Finding meaning can thus be achieved through building relationships and empathy with clients.

However, empathy and engagement with high needs clients in a challenging work environment can feel overwhelming and lead to chronic stress, frustration, and eventual apathy (Curtis et al., 1990; Lambert & Hogan et al., 2010); some JJOs in the jail setting expressed these feelings in their job role.. Engagement can facilitate the rewards of satisfaction, but it can also activate higher levels of emotional resonance leading to sympathetic distress -especially if the worker does not feel they can make a difference:



Emotional engagement (caring) is demanded by “helping” job roles; but arousing and involving work may produce emotional exhaustion over time. This is especially true if the worker’s efforts repeatedly fail, producing a lowered sense of personal accomplishment. (Jenkins & Maslach, 1994, p. 104)

Empathy and engagement with clients thus requires supporting workers’ efficacy to balance the job role demands for emotion labor, emotion resonance, empathy and motivation. This can be done through better practices in the workplace as well as individual training skills.

### **Improving the Work and Workplace**

There are many opportunities for improving the JJOs’ everyday experience through targeted workplace changes. Workplace conditions can facilitate meaning through a system of feedback and rewards, which emphasizes the success and significance of workers’ individual contributions (Porter et al., 1973; Triplett, Mullings, & Scarborough, 1996). These conditions also include fostering a work environment that promotes quality relationships with clients, coworkers, and management, as well as worker autonomy (Gerstein et al., 1987).

**Increased time to connect with youth.** As described in the introduction, JJOs have two job roles: providing discipline (safety and law enforcement) and rehabilitation (counseling and role modeling). Throughout the study, JJOs repeatedly described their motivation and satisfaction in their role of rehabilitation and connection with the youth. They are realistic about the limitations of the “rehabilitation” they can expect to provide the youth, considering the high recidivism rates and the complex psychosocial issues many of the youth face once released (Krisberg, 2005).

Despite valuing and enjoying connection with the youth, the JJOs can become resigned to simply fulfilling the role of disciplinarian. One JJO in the jail described the process that new workers go through: you start the job wanting to save and rehabilitate every youth, then you start to feel unsuccessful and frustrated by recidivism, then you realize management doesn’t care whether you try to help or just sit around the unit and do checks, and finally you just feel tired and do the minimum required of you -- cell checks and required safety responses. One can imagine losing JJOs to these feelings of apathy, which can have a cost on the relationships with the youth as well as to the motivation and well being of JJOs.

The JJOs working in the Glenwood Boys Camp provided another example for how JJOs can fulfill their job role. These JJOs have more requirements to build relationships with youth and reported feeling that this was “a gift.” In the Hillcrest Jail setting, JJOs have to initiate opportunities to connect with youth through their own development of hour-long programs and activities. These programs can be offered throughout the day when the youth would otherwise be locked up inside their cell with no other activity. Leading programs with youth was frequently reported by JJOs as an opportunity to learn more about the youth and to share something about themselves. However, programming is not prioritized or supported by management. A recommendation for the institution would be to clarify and prioritize the rehabilitation role by incentivizing opportunities to build relationships and connect with youth in the Jail. The prioritization of programs

could include a system for evaluating the quality of programming to reward the JJOs who deserve it, and to support those who need help to improve their program development and leading skills.

**Improving coworker connections.** The JJOs in the jail and in the camp work cooperatively with three to five other JJOs on the same shift. In the jail, there is a brief staff meeting to discuss operations before every shift. The communication in this meeting goes one way: from managers to JJOs. The JJOs in the jail described frustrations relating to lack of group communication with coworkers and with management.

In the camp setting, the work is more collaborative, which provided feelings of common purpose and cohesion. JJOs in this setting had more opportunities for coworker debriefing and group support. There are regularly scheduled “offsite” days where JJOs leave the worksite to discuss relevant issues from work. This dedicated time for staff to support each other strengthens the bonds among workers, providing a positive feedback loop and a culture of support. In contrast, JJOs in the jail felt a lack of trust in coworkers, leading to a culture of suspicion.

Coworkers can mitigate the burden of work stress through helping one another with responsibilities, fostering meaning through shared experiences, and providing peer support for feelings of frustration, stress, and success. Another practice that the institution could support would be creating regular opportunities for staff debriefings and discussion in the jail setting.

**Job role clarity, autonomy, and positive feedback.** The institutionally defined expectations of the job role influence a large part of the everyday work experience (Glazer & Beehr, 2005). As described above, there is a lack of job role clarity and expectations around rehabilitation (as opposed to discipline) with youth. Although the well-known definition of the JJO job role is “ Care, Custody, and Control,” there is no clear definition of how, when, and where care should occur. Also, there is no feedback for performance of care, whereas the tasks for maintaining custody and control (physical restraints during a fight, bed checks, writing up incidents of aggression) are clearly defined, evaluated, and taught. In addition to the recommendation for the institution to prioritize time for JJOs to connect with youth, the institution could develop clear expectations about provision of rehabilitation and set up a system for evaluating the successful completion of this role.

Worker autonomy is another critical piece of promoting satisfaction and organizational commitment (Glazer & Beehr, 2005; Ivancevich & Matteson, 1980; Steiner et al., 2003). Autonomy allows workers to play a role in higher-level decisions that impact their jobs, as well as to exercise their judgment within their job roles. One example of this is in the scheduling of work shifts. The lack of input in scheduling of shifts was a topic that made many JJOs feel frustrated, powerless, and mistreated by management. The offsite days organized by the camp provide an opportunity for JJOs to give feedback and feel heard by management about topics such as scheduling. Another suggestion for the institution is to consider how to include the feedback of JJOs about their work in the jail setting.

## **Individual Skills Training**

The previous section considered how the institution could better promote opportunities for meaning in the workplace through shifting institutional policies in the jail to reflect those that work in the camp. This section describes how specific skills in the pilot training addressed reported obstacles to meaning: individual experiences of stressors and stress. The JJOs in this study were forthcoming in describing the obstacles of workplace stress as well as affirming a core motivation to be of service and to find meaning in their work. The obstacles for finding meaning in work included negative coworkers, lack of job role clarity, minimal opportunities to positively interact with youth, poor communication, rigidity of work structure and hierarchy, and frontline work stress. With this data guiding the process, the development of a pilot training curriculum incorporated intervention practices to address key learning objectives. These learning objectives were to enhance skills of emotion regulation, mindfulness, psycho-education of stress, and empathic communication.

Delivering and evaluating the training provided invaluable information on the basic feasibility of this training. Below is a short list and review of the key skills that were the most immediately useful to JJOs, based on focus group and online evaluation data presented in Chapter 4. Training in these specific skills should be considered for future studies in this setting.

**Micro-expression of emotion training tool.** Emotion regulation, as described in chapter one, is how we manage the cognitive appraisals and expressed behaviors during the timeline of an emotional response. I guided the JJOs through the basic identification of emotions and the micro expression of emotions; they did pre- and post-practice evaluations to track their own learning. Learning to read facial expression of emotion can quickly improve non-verbal communication, which may improve communication with youth and coworkers and help inform empathic accuracy (picking up on cues to understand the emotional experience of others).

**Compassion exercise.** The self-compassion meditation guided JJOs to consider their struggles, suffering, and discomforts in the job and at home, and then to imagine this suffering lifted from them. This same guided meditation was then applied to the youth and coworkers. Self-compassion helps reduce the felt burden of stress through replacing negative thoughts about the self with more constructive, kind attention toward the self; this creates quick relief from focusing on emotional and mental distress. Compassion for others can also help JJOs manage their emotional resonance to struggles of coworkers and youth. Compassion for self and others is a very useful tool for combating feelings of hopelessness among JJOs who struggle to feel that they are making a difference and frequently become cynical toward the youth and about their own ability to help.

**Anchoring breath in the body.** As described in chapter four the meditation was guided in both lying down sessions and in shorter seated sessions. The meditation aimed to relax them, through focused attention on their breath and relaxation in their body. This technique was then taught in shorter increments: one- to four-minute re-centering achieved by closing the eyes and again focusing on the breath in the body. These techniques taught JJOs to manage feelings of stress and cynicism through relaxation in their body. This relaxation is targeted to help JJOs

feel more attentive to their feelings and thoughts, which could improve communication and empathy.

**Psycho-education of burnout and stress.** As described in Chapter 4, the JJOs were taught about burnout, cynicism, and depersonalization with a lecture and discussion. I encouraged JJOs to ask questions and give examples from their own experience. The JJOs were very engaged in the discussion and benefitted from the opportunity to have a framework to understand stress and share their concerns. The discussion also allowed coworkers to debrief and support one another.

**Professional empathy and communication.** The empathy skills taught included the empathic listening and honestly expressing used in vignettes of youth and coworkers. The live practice of these skills allowed the JJOs to consider and discuss challenges in their current communication, especially with coworkers. This practice provided JJOs with a concrete opportunity to try new communication skills and exercise empathy for the youth and coworkers.

These skills described above were specifically identified as the most readily and easily useful at work and at home.

## **Prevention**

An ideal solution for managing workplace stressors and stress, and promoting opportunities for empathy and meaning, could be achieved through institutionalizing the policies and training skills described above. Research on stress prevention suggests that it is important to examine the environmental workplace conditions, individual skills and “mutual interaction” between the individual and their work environment (Maslach & Goldberg, 1999). Maslach and Goldberg (1999) provide a review of the multidimensional approach to prevention based on responding to the burnout model’s emotional exhaustion, lack of accomplishment, and cynicism with a person-centered approach.

The person-centered approach includes four key suggestions very much in line with the sections above for institutional shifts in the workplace and individual training: developing individual coping skills (through cognitive restructuring and reappraisal), utilizing social resources (coworker support, reducing isolation), creating a relaxed lifestyle (meditation/ massage/ biofeedback) and practicing self-analysis (developing self-awareness). There are two additional suggestions that are not encompassed in this study: changing work patterns (working less or taking more breaks) and making improvements in health (personal fitness). These suggestions are also important ways to help workers balance the stress of their work life, which could be supported institutionally through changes in scheduling to allow for more free time and even establishing incentives for physical exercise (by providing gym memberships or having onsite instruction of yoga or another physical activity break during the work day).

This person-centered approach coheres well with the skills taught in this pilot training, and the department of Juvenile Probation might consider teaching them in a preventative capacity. Currently, there are annually required one- and two-day trainings about CPR, physical restraint tactics, and identifying adolescent sex trafficking. The suggestions in the section above for incentivizing interactions

between JJOs and youth, making opportunities for coworker communication and support, and clarifying job roles could also potentially prevent burnout among new staff, be an additional benefit for staff who are currently managing stress well, and help workers currently struggling with stress.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations of the current case study. These include: (1) the limited sample size, (2) survey tools not designed for this population, (3) the lack of a control or comparison group for the pilot training, and (4) obstacles with technology-related data collection.

At the outset, it is also important to note several features related to the study setting itself that shaped some of the data collection procedures and participation. Managers of the facility provided shift coverage and pay to encourage JJOs to participate in the focus groups as well as in the trainings. The participation in the focus groups was voluntary, raising the possibility that participating workers may have differed in important ways relative to non-participants.

Importantly, the initial study plan included further survey assessments, follow-up trainings for more JJO staff and managers, and additional qualitative data collection at the camp and the jail to increase the overall sample size. One month after the end of the first training group, in December of 2011, there was an unfortunate and unanticipated incident that resulted in legal proceedings against the Chief of the Department of San Mateo Juvenile Probation who was fired that same month. Although the study contact was the Deputy Chief, the entire department was reorganized and the deputy was transferred. I could not continue research in the jail or camp setting in any form. I was unable to create a new contact in the jail despite many attempts. These events were an unanticipated obstacle to further study follow-up, including comparison surveys with JJOs who did not do the training group and, ultimately, the total number of study participants.

Additionally, there were some weaknesses among survey measures, specifically the empathy scale, which was not designed for human service providers who experience high levels of exposure to struggle and suffering. This scale was included because it is the gold standard for the evaluation of empathy; however, it has clear limitations for application in this setting. The survey questions ask about exposure to sympathetic distress as though it were an uncommon phenomenon, instead of part of the everyday job role of working in corrections with aggressive and depressed youth. A meaning in work scale should have been included; however, the importance of meaning in work was an emergent area of importance not evident in the first phase of survey data collection.

There were also sources of participant non-response due to a technical issue of using online formats. The JJOs could not use online survey formats during work hours due to a firewall preventing internet access during work shifts. JJOs had to do any online survey work at home where they were less likely to use free time to follow up. An experience sample method survey was also developed and provided for participants to track and monitor everyday experience of emotion, sleep, stress and behaviors between days one and two of the training. Unfortunately, the

program is run through an online host, and the firewall prevented the JJOs from tracking their daily data. I was not aware of the firewall when designing the online components of the training; as a result, they were not filled out and not included in the study. The experience sample method has been used in research to collect reliable information on everyday emotional and stress experiences to complement traditional survey scales.

### **Future Directions**

For future research directions of this study, I plan to continue to explore the following questions: Does chronic stress impact the ability to empathically engage with clients? What is the best delivery for empathy and mindfulness skills trainings to support human service care providers? I also plan to add an important aspect to this study: is empathic engagement important for client experience of care and client outcomes, and how can this be evaluated?

These research questions require two primary branches of investigation: the first is how to design and deliver interventions for care providers who are serving vulnerable populations, and the second is how to evaluate the impact of such trainings on the providers and on the providers' client interactions. This dissertation has built the framework for this first branch of inquiry, and my future research goals are to reach the second branch of investigation, which is to evaluate the downstream impact of provider care on clients.

The next important step in developing the study of, and support for, human service care providers is to further bridge these literatures on stress, empathy and meaning to consider the relations among the key constructs. The research on finding meaning in work is not well populated with studies in the human service setting and could benefit from further conceptual development.

Another important next step for this research is to replicate the study with a larger sample of JJOs, one which could provide the opportunity for further observation, interviews, surveys and an experimental design for the delivery of the DREAM training. The next iteration of this study will narrow in on specific survey measures to reflect new important areas of interest from this study, including meaning, cooperation, mindfulness and self-compassion in addition to burnout and professional quality of life. Capturing stress, empathy and meaning levels from another, larger group of JJOs would provide further important data on this understudied population.

The lack of an appropriate empathy measure for the human service setting might require additional sources of information to track the empathic behavior of JJOs. Developing a 360 observational design with the feedback of youth and coworkers could help to identify and track the empathic interactions of JJOs with the youth and with their coworkers. The design could allow for further understanding of how the stress of JJOs may impact the quality of relationships among JJOs.

Another delivery of the DREAM training could be organized with an experimental design to have a treatment group receiving the training alongside a waitlist control group to develop meaningful pre and post training evaluations. The DREAM training will be enhanced to reflect the evaluation data from this study and could ideally integrate some further organizational and person-centered approaches

as listed above. In addition to the Juvenile Justice setting, this training and research topic could be studied in other human service settings among adult Correctional Officers, as well as in schools and hospitals. This study was an important step to building a framework for exploring the relationship between empathy, meaning and workplace stress, and for considering skills for implementing training interventions to support human service care providers.

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## **APPENDIX A CONSENT FORMS**

### **Consent to Participate in Research Juvenile Probation Stress Study**

#### **Introduction and Purpose**

My name is Eve Ekman. I am a graduate student at the University of California, working with my faculty advisor, Professor Jodi Halpern in the School of Public Health. I would like to invite you to take part in my research study, which concerns workplace stress and evaluating the stress skills training.

#### **Procedures**

If you agree to participate in my research, I will conduct an interview with you. The responses will involve questions about the benefits and burdens of working in Probation and how this training addressed these stresses. It should last fifteen to thirty minutes. With your permission, I will audiotape and take notes. The taping is to accurately record the information you provide, and will be used for transcription purposes only. If you agree to being audiotaped but feel uncomfortable at any time, I can turn off the tape recorder at your request. Or if you don't wish to continue, you can stop at any time.

#### **Benefits**

There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study, but the experience of talking about work place stress may help relieve some symptoms of stress temporarily. It is hoped that the research will identify the causes of stress in the workplace and improve this stress skills training.

#### **Risks/Discomforts**

Some of the research questions may make you feel stress from describing the stressful experiences. You are free to decline to answer any questions you don't wish to, or to stop the interview at any time. As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality could be compromised; however, we are taking precautions to minimize this risk. (See below for more detail.)

#### **Confidentiality**

Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used.

To minimize the risks to confidentiality, I will keep the data protected with password protection on the computer, your name will never be collected and any identifying information will be removed.



**APPENDIX B  
DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET**

1. What is your current position in the Department of Probations:

- GS
- GS2
- GS3

2. What shift do you work:

- Day Shift
- PM Shift
- Graveyard Shift

3. How Long Have you worked in this Position:

- 0-3 years
- 4-7years
- 8-11years
- 12-15 years
- 16-19years
- over 20

4. Have you worked in other Probation Departments

- Yes ( If yes go to 5)
- No

5. Where else in Probation

Department: \_\_\_\_\_  
Years of Service: \_\_\_\_\_  
Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Have you worked in Law Enforcement before?

- Yes ( If yes go to 7)
- No

7. I In Law Enforcement

Department: \_\_\_\_\_  
Years of Service: \_\_\_\_\_  
Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Have you done Military Service?

- Yes ( If yes go to 9)
- No



<p>9. In Military          Division: _____          Years of Service: _____          Position: _____</p>
<p>10. What is your age? _____</p>
<p>11. What is your marital Status?  <input type="radio"/> married (go to 13)  <input type="radio"/> widowed divorced (go to 12)  <input type="radio"/> separated  <input type="radio"/> single  <input type="radio"/> live with significant other</p>

12. If Divorced:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	more than 10
How many times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
For how many years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. If Married

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	more than 10
How many times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
For how many years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. Do you have kids or do you stepparent kids?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	more than 10
How many	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. If you have kids how many are living at home?											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	more than 10
How many	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. What is your ethnicity? Choose as man as apply.

- White
- African American
- Latino
- Asian
- Asian Pacific Islander
- Native American
- Other

17. What is your educational level?

- BA
- Masters
- PhD

18. Have you ever been injured on the job?

- Yes ( Go to 19 and 20)
- No ( skip to 21)

19. How Many Times?											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	more than 10
How many times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20. How long did you miss work in total for injury?

22. How would you rate your overall physical health?

- Very Bad
- Bad
- Poor
- Neither Good nor Bad
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good

23. Do you suffer from any chronic illnesses?

- Yes ( go to 24)
- no

24. What illness or illnesses?  
\_\_\_\_\_

25. When do you intend to leave this job?

- 0-1 years
- 2-3 years
- 4-5 years
- 6-7 years
- 8-9 years
- 10 years or more

## APPENDIX C FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

*Prompt: Thank you for your participation in this group. This is an interview that will last until \_\_\_\_\_. The purpose of this interview group is to collect your reflections and ideas about both the sources of stress and the methods you use to avoid stress and stay engaged at work. This is being recorded in building my research on burnout and engagement in interpersonally challenging work environments. Interviews are a crucial way to identify themes that will direct the course of the research, for example if I hear from you that sleepless nights are common for all of you I will make sure to delve deeper in to this issue for individual interviews and other ways to measure the effect of work on your life and health.*

*I will never link your name to your responses and I wish to emphasize this is a confidential space. I will also suggest that you avoid using examples that would negatively target specific co-workers. I will be taking notes throughout to help me put my ideas together. Thank you again for your participation, are there any questions before we begin?*

1. What was the motivation that brought you to this job?
  - a. Has this changed over time?
2. Please describe what you understand to be the expectations of your job?
  - a. How does this match what you do in your everyday shift?
  - b. In what ways does your role at work match your personality and in what ways does it not? Are you are the same person at work and at home?
  - c. Do you think part of your job is to be a 'bad guy' with clients or co-workers?
3. What are the top sources of stress in your everyday work environment?
  - a. This environment can include the physical space of the units, the social space of co-workers, the actual work managing and programming with the youth.
  - b. Do you feel a sense of threat of physical harm in your everyday work?
  - c. Have you felt burnt-out recently? What does burnout feel like? How long does it last?
4. Describe the role of cooperation with your co-workers in your everyday shift?
  - i. How are co-worker concerns dealt with?
  - ii. Who do you ask when you need help?

*The next set of questions will be asking you to provide examples from your experience at work. When giving examples please be as general as possible, examples from your experience will be incredibly rich and informative, please remember confidentiality.*

#### 1. **Universality**

**Please give examples from your experience when:**

You have identified with the experience of a youth strongly, maybe the experience reminded you of yourself or someone you know.

(What did you do? How was this different from what you normally do?)

2. ***Ethical/Moral***

**Please give examples from your experience when:**

You felt some injustice about one of the youth. Was the injustice from the family, from treatment of other youths, the court or the probation department.

(What did you do? How was this different from what you normally do?)

3. **Intrapersonal**

**Please give example from your experience when:**

Any case that recently stuck in your mind, one you thought about after work and frequently?

(Do you feel this everyday? How do you deal with it?)

4. **Please give example from your experience when:**

What is a case when you wanted to do more and could not, what more did you want to do? Why couldn't you do it?

5. **Interpersonal**

- a. When you have a question about your work who do you ask?
- b. When you feel stress from your work who do you talk to?

6. **Efficacy**

**Please give examples from your experience when:**

You felt success with the job, what was the source of success?

**a. Please give examples from your experience when:**

- i. When you feel that you are unable to help a client or family.  
What did you do? How was this different from what you normally do?
- ii. You felt success with the job, what was the source of success?

**b. What are examples of:**

- i. Something you feel especially well suited to do in your job?
- ii. Something your feel is a serious challenge that is required for your job?

## **APPENDIX D TRAINING MATERIALS**

### **Curriculum, Day One**

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#### **9:00-10:00am - Why Are We Here? Why Are You Here?**

(Chris) Welcome and Scope

Short Guided Meditation Practice: Land in Body (Chris)

Group Introductions (Eve) Self Intro and Group Introductions

Group Discussion: What Are You Here for and What Do You Want to Take Away? Setting an Intention (Eve)

Instruction on Agreements for Confidentiality (Chris And Eve)

#### **9:45-10am- Opening Meditations**

Guided Meditation Practice: Setting an Anchor Down into The Body (Chris)

#### **10-1100am –Group Instruction: Definition And Function Of Emotion And Stress**

Instruction on Characteristics, Definitions, and Functions, Physiology of Emotion-

Group Activity Example of Emotion Words and Faces

Psycho Education on Chronic Stress, Burnout, Empathy, Threat, and Challenge Fight-Flight- Freeze (Eve)

Psycho Education on Research of Positive Psychology- Happiness ,Motivation in Work and Meaningful Life (Eve)

Group Discussion

#### **11-11:15am Break**

#### **11:15-Noon Instruction of Mindfulness and Practice of Meditation**

Instruction on Short Moments of Awareness Many Times (Chris)

Group Discussion on Aspiration to Help - Benefit of Helping Others, Motivation for This Work,

Meaning of Positive Experiences, and Importance of Mindful Awareness (Chris)

Guided Meditation Practice Felt Experience of Emotion (Body Scan) (Chris)

#### **Noon-12:30pm Emotion Regulation**

Group Instruction Regulation: Decreasing Regrettable Emotional Episodes, Increasing Choice and Meta-Cognition (Eve)

#### **12:30-1:30pm Lunch**

**1:30-1:45** –Guided Mediation Practice of Full-Body Awareness (Chris)

#### **1:45-2:00: Working With Emotion Episodes**

Group Activity: Mapping The Timeline of Emotion (Eve)

#### **2:00-3:00 – Building Emotion Awareness**

Dyad Exercise: Learning The Facial Expression/Memory of Anger and Fear (Eve)

#### **3-315pm - Break**

#### **3:15-4pm Emotion Awareness/Regulation**

Group Discussion of Dyad Exercise of Emotion Experience (Eve)

Instruction on Resonance-Mirror-Empathy, Setting Boundaries - How To Regulate Emotion in Order To Deal With Emotion Better, Meta-Cognition Vs. Cognitive Fusion

**4-4:45 - Cultivating The Wakefulness Necessary to Observe and Regulate Emotion**

Short Guided Meditation Practice (Chris)

Instruction on How to Use Short Moments of Awareness Many Times Become Automatic and More Continuous, Choosing an Anchor

Guided Meditation Practice: Close With A Dedication –Compassion and Loving Kindness

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**Table Two: Curriculum, Day Two**

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**9-9:15 Morning Practice**

Guided Meditation Practice (Chris)

**9:15-9:45 Professional Empathy and Boundaries**

Instruction and Group Discussion on Depersonalization, Working with Vulnerable Populations, Emotions of Disgust

Instruction on Professional Empathy Affective/Emotional Empathy and Cognitive Perspective

**9:45-10:30 Reflection on Practice and Managing Emotion with RAIN**

Group Discussion of Last Two Weeks of Integration of Mindfulness

Instruction on How to Recognize, Allow, Investigate, and Non-Identify Emotional Needs and Wants, Empathy, and Acceptance (Chris)

**10:30-10:45 Survey**

**10:45-11 Break**

**11:00-11:45 Practice Empathy Skills**

Dyadic Activity Using Vignettes to Practice Empathy with Coworker/Youth,

Group Discussion on Cooperation Versus Cynicism, and Perspective Taking with Youth and Coworkers

**11:45- 12: 30 METT**

Group Activity: Using Online Micro Expression Training Tool to Learn Facial Expression of Emotion

**12:30-1:30 Lunch**

**1:30-2pm Meditation**

Guided Meditation: Practice Of Body Scan (Chris)

**2pm-2:30pm Metta/ Self Compassion**

Instruction in Practicing Compassion for Self and for Others (Chris)

**2:30-2:45pm Break**

**2:45-3:30 Reflections - Evaluation**

Group Discussion: What Are The Emotions, Stress and Motivations That Are Emerging?  
Plans for Future Practice? What Worked? What Didn't?

**3:30-4pm Future Practices**

Instruction: Working With Reactivity, Difficult Emotions and Rumination, Didactic Instruction, Formal Versus Informal Practice (at Home Versus in Class) (Chris)

Group Discussion: Reconnect to Aspirations/Motivations for This Work and Meaning In Work (Eve)  
Short Guided Meditation Practice, Dedication of Merit to Self, Self-Compassion (Chris)

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**APPENDIX E**  
**FULL CODE FREQUENCY LIST**

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Work Structure and Hierarchy	109
Cynicism and Negativity	71
Lack of Communication	58
Engagement/Empathy	43
Coworker-Related Stress	41
Working with the Youth	41
Motivation for Job	40
Success	36
Frontline Work Stress	35
Meaning in Work	34
Role Expectations	33
Coping	31
Burnout	28
Personal Safety	28
Coworker Support	24
Family Life	20
Scheduling	19
Previous Related Work in the Field	12
Disengagement	10
Earning Money	10
Using Alcohol to Cope	1

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