"And now I don't know who I am": An Exploration of Wellbeing in Former Undercover Police Officers

Liam Scott Curran

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Abstract

Undercover policing, broadly, is the practice of covert deceptive and non-deceptive activities to identify and gather intelligence against offenders. This thesis explores the emotional and psychological wellbeing of former undercover police officers; firstly, by ascertaining the stressors experienced when participating in an undercover operation, and secondly by understanding the ways in which former officers utilised coping strategies. This thesis explores the concepts of: stress and coping; policing research, and undercover policing and stress. This exploration aids in understanding the psychological risks of undertaking an undercover assignment, the welfare of undercover police officers, the inherent dangers in undercover policing, and the practice of deception in undercover policing. The focus of this research was primarily upon the wellbeing of undercover police officers, rather than the operational methods by which undercover police officers conduct their work. In order to do this, a qualitative approach was taken. Data were gathered by conducting semi-structured interviews with five former undercover police officers from various forces, with a focus on wellbeing and coping in an undercover capacity. Data were thematically analysed, and overall it was found that formal support networks were limited, and of poor quality with no alternative, such as friends and family. The stressors experienced by UCOs were found to resonate with previous research, surrounding concepts of risks to safety, as well as risks to emotional and mental wellbeing, and alcohol use, although analysis around identity stressors does not correlate with previous research. Reflection was often utilised negatively, often leading to rumination, however physical activity was positively used by most of the participants. Though limited in scope, this research brings contemporary understanding to an important, but underdeveloped and often fragmented body of knowledge surrounding undercover policing. As a result of this, suggestions for further research and policy implications are also presented.

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Dedications and Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Undercover policing and other clandestine activities of the state are phenomena well established in both the world of fiction and in reality. Popular works such as The Man Who Was Thursday (Chesterton, 2012), exposés of double agents (Wright, 1987), and academic accounts of the Security Service and Special Branch (Bonino, 2018) have demonstrated this fact. Undercover policing has been an unprecedentedly powerful tool in intelligence and counter-intelligence as well as policing. The effects are profound against those upon whom such activity is performed and are equally as profound upon those who perform it. It is the latter group with which this thesis expands knowledge of, specifically, the undercover police officer.

Various definitions of an undercover police officer exist, for example: where "…an undercover law enforcement officer assumes a civic role by posing as a member of a criminal group with a view to gathering evidence and/or intelligence concerning past or future criminal activities" (Girodo, 1985, p. 300) or "UCOs are deployed under direction in an authorised investigation or operation in which their true identity is concealed from third parties" (College of Policing, 2015). In England and Wales, a UCO is designated as a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA, 2000), who will maintain a personal or other relationship to facilitate information gathering or the provision of access to the information and/or the covert disclosure of information or by the consequence of the existence of this relationship. Thus the fundamental goal of the UCO is to gather and document evidence by gathering it from the 'inside', or as part of the criminal sphere (Miller, 2006). Although not exhaustive, the areas investigated by UCO's may be drugs, terrorism, money laundering and property crime. There may be passivity to it, such as wiretapping, reading emails and surveillance as examples, whereas undercover can be taken to mean deception and provocation perpetrated by the operative themselves (Loftus & Goold, 2012). Therefore, covert policing traverses a spectrum of clandestine tactics from passive surveillance to potentially participating in the offences themselves (Wilson & McCulloch, 2012).

This thesis presents findings from interviews with five former undercover police officers aimed at unearthing the existence of any stressors faced by them during their undercover careers and to explore coping strategies utilised to combat the effects of those stressors. Through semi-structured interviews, areas such as risks to wellbeing; identity; family; support networks; and coping strategies were all identified, explored, and analysed to provide the perspective of the undercover officers themselves, largely ignored in modern policing research. The implications are reported on and discussed in order to offer guidance for future undercover policing researchers, as well has how such data can be utilised to inform policy on undercover policing.

Firstly, the literature review discussed stress, coping and wellbeing literature, providing a timeline of paradigm shifts in the way stress and coping is understood. This leads onto stress, coping and wellbeing in the context of policing, discussing trauma severity, as well as organisational stressors. Then the literature review briefly reports on the current climate of undercover policing in the UK and how this affects the current focus of academic literature on the subject. Finally, an in-depth critical assessment of the more specific literature on undercover policing is carried out, first identifying stressors in undercover policing and then analysing common elements that make this activity stressful, and how these impact on officers emotional and psychological wellbeing.

Next, a discussion of the methodology is presented. Philosophical debates are considered, to justify the choice of most appropriate methodology and associated method to achieve the research aims. This discussion aided in formulating an interview schedule. The first section includes questions exploring the stressors faced by undercover police officers and includes concepts such as risk and danger when participating in undercover operations and how they felt, including the effects on family life. This informs the second section of the interview, which discussed the coping strategies employed by former officers.

Presented next is an analysis of the collected data, analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) version of a thematic analysis. This process permitted an understanding of various cognitive and emotional stressors, such as feelings of conflict, pressure from senior colleagues, excitement, emotional attachment, and fear for personal safety. Analysis of coping strategies brought to the fore issues around venting to other police officers and police culture, the utility of reflection, and seeking support from superiors.

Finally, the key findings are summarised in the conclusion. Here is a discussion of the implications of this research, and how it can be used to inform policy changes, as well as how this data adds to the knowledge base of undercover policing research, including a discussion of the barriers presented to undercover policing researchers.

Literature Review

Stress, Coping, and Wellbeing

The first area of literature reviewed is an overview of stress and coping research, discussing the stressors and the reactions to stressors and potential effects upon wellbeing.

The understanding of stress in the physiological sense was increasing prior to the first great war, and was believed to be the body in a dynamic state of fighting back (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The theory belonging to Claude Bernard (1815-1878), who developed the ideas of the *milieu interieur*, that is to say, the environment within, argued that the body is constantly working to create a stable and well maintained system (Robinson, 2018). Sir William Osler (1849-1919) described the personality of the typical cardiovascular patient as highly driven and ambitious, prior to the classification of and correlation between the Type-A personality and cardiovascular disease (Robinson, 2018). Those with Type-A personality react more hyperactively to a potential stressor, which increases norepinephrine and epinephrine production, resulting in increased blood pressure and heart rate (Billing & Steverson, 2013). The theory that "the bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur is the emotion" (James, 1884, pp. 189–190) is described as the James-Lange theory of emotion (Robinson, 2018). This postulation was then refuted by Sherrington (1899), via experiments on dogs, by severing the spinal cord in such a way as to preclude the aforementioned processes to contribute to the nervous processes of emotion, yet behaviours indicating the presence of emotions were just the same as they were before when presented with various stimuli.

Selye then pioneered research into the term 'stress' (Yvette & Stefan, 2008), restructuring what he first called General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) in patients exhibiting a general syndrome of sickness (Selye, 1956, 1974). Selye (1974) pointed out that there are positive and negative stressors, and both use

up the body's finite reserve of adaptive energy (Rochette & Vergely, 2017; Selye, 1956, 1974). Selye's stress research led to the discovery of a triad of symptomology, such as gastrointestinal ulceration, thymico-lymphatic atrophy and adrenocortical ulceration. This he claimed, was reminiscent of his early student days studying the 'general syndrome of sickness' that led to the discovery of stress (Selye, 1974). Others dispute this, and have argued his work is placed in the context of the term stress to mean an environmental strain upon a bodily system (Viner, 1999).

The proposition that most diseases are induced in an environment with accumulated social stress has been investigated in an attempt to show that positive and negative life changes can impact upon ones health (Rahe, Meyer, Smith, Kjaer, & Holmes, 1964). Certain life events such as death of a family member or illness of a mate were designated the events most frequently associated with coronary occlusion (Rahe et al., 1964). A common theme amongst the life events is observed, that they all usually evoke some adaptive or coping behaviour on the behalf of the individual, and is important to note that "the emphasis is on the change from the steady state rather than the psychological meaning, emotion or social desirability" (Holmes & Rahe, 1967, p. 217). Subsequent research has however shown that negative events play a greater role in the event of illness than positive events (Dohrenwend, 2006; Lazarus, 2006). Still, it is argued that the body's vulnerability is enhanced in times of clustering life changes (Rahe et al., 1964). However, whilst 'statistically significant', given the large sample sizes common in life stress research, there are often very small correlations between studies assessing life events and onset of illness, usually below .30, accounting for around 9% of variance in illness (Lazarus, 2006; Rabkin & Struening, 1976), thus in practical terms, life events scores are not good predictors of future illness probability. Further, Rabkin and Struening (1976), note a common issue with life events research is a failure to take into account mediating factors such as stressor characteristics, individual attributes and external mediating factors such as support networks.

Lazarus introduced cognition in the way stress manifests (Robinson, 2018), thus conceptualised, "psychological stress is a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being." (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 19). There are three types of stress: challenge; threat; and harm-loss (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Challenge is the potential to gain benefits through the overcoming of

obstacles by mastery; threat occurs when someone anticipates harm-loss; harm-loss being the actual loss of something (Rexrode, Petersen, & O'Toole, 2007). However, this definition is regarded as imprecise and overinclusive, and operationalisation of the transactional model of stress as questionable (Kavanagh, 1986). Coping is defined as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person." (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 141). Between the two concepts exists appraisal, primary and secondary types. Primary is the identification of a threat, and what could happen if a goal is threatened and the person evaluates what is at stake in a situation (Rexrode et al., 2007), and secondary appraisal is the identification of what can be done, and an evaluation of the coping options (Lazarus, 2006) where each resource is assessed, as well as alternative ways to deal with the situation (Rexrode et al., 2007). Appraisal is not in itself coping, but an important part (Lazarus, 2006), as coping is relevant upon the efficacy and appropriateness of the technique (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Stress is thus subjective in the way it manifests in different people (Rabkin & Struening, 1976; Robinson, 2018). Lazarus and Folkman (Lazarus, 2006; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) have verified empirically that the outcome of a perceived demand is ultimately decided by the affected person through appraisal (Gräßel & Adabbo, 2011), as applied to research regarding family members caring for chronically ill older family members (Gräßel & Adabbo, 2011). Further, the transactional model, when applied to studying stress and coping when parenting a disabled child, showed utility in identifying common stressors, highlighting the importance of considering the individual in regards appraisal and coping (Tara, Davina, & Miguel, 2005).

Coping strategies can be grouped into two main types, such as emotion-focused or problem-focused (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The former relates to directing the emotional response to the event, whereas the latter is related to managing or altering the problem causing the distress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). It is noted, however, that higher order categories (problem-focused, and emotion-focused) are unhelpful in three ways: they are not mutually exclusive, conceptually clear, or exhaustive. The latter is especially unclear given that active attempts to calm oneself are described as emotion-focused, but so are uncontrolled panic or venting. Secondly, most ways of coping can serve both functions, they are both problem and emotion-focused. For example, making plans can guide problem solving but can also calm emotion (Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood, 2003). This is addressed by

Lazarus (1996) who states "…in reality, any coping thought or act can serve both or perhaps many other functions" (p. 293). Thirdly, the two categories are not exhaustive, as some ways of coping appear to fall outside both domains. For example, it is argued that social support is neither problem or emotion-focused, being instead focused on other people (Skinner et al., 2003).

Others propose that seeking social support is itself a third function (Cousson-Gélie et al., 2010). Social support is an effective way of coping with stress, as it targets the cause and reduces distress, which then offers long term stress relief (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988b). In support of this, a systematic review of nurses' coping strategies found that nurse managers utilised social support from colleagues and superiors, and that level of support is a good predictor of job stress in this population (Labrague, McEnroe-Petitte, Leocadio, Van Bogaert, & Cummings, 2018). Further, adequate social support has been linked to lower depressive symptoms and lower turnover intentions as well as increased competence and professional growth (Labrague et al., 2018).

Other processes of coping can include the relationships between self-reflection, self-insight and rumination in mediating a person's wellbeing. Self-reflection is often confounded with rumination; the former being an awareness of ones thoughts, behaviours and feelings and the latter is passively and repeatedly focusing on symptoms of distress and the circumstances surrounding them (Stein & Grant, 2014). This is unhelpful when examining both concepts' and their utility in mediating wellbeing. For example, Burwell and Shirk (2007) argue that self-reflection does not predict depressive symptoms longitudinally, whereas brooding and rumination does. This is counter to others who have found that high levels of self-reflection are associated with neuroticism (Harrington & Loffredo, 2010), anxiety (Wells, 1985), and excessive rumination (Trapnell & Campbell, 1999). This relationship is called the self-absorption paradox (Trapnell & Campbell, 1999). Instead, others interject that self-reflection is multidimensional (Joireman & Hammersla, 2002) and can be an asset and a liability (Joireman, 2004). Self-reflection is instead shown to be logically independent of any emotional value, and is instead related to the salient thoughts and feelings experienced during that reflection (Stein & Grant, 2014). A proposed model shows that when controlling for negative attitudes, self-reflection is the beginning of the pathway to self-insight, which is utilised in many therapeutic settings as it can predict lower levels of anxiety, depression, negative effect, and increases positive subjective wellbeing (Harrington & Loffredo, 2010;

Stein & Grant, 2014). Although, it is not known *why* negative attitudes impede this pathway to subjective

wellbeing (Stein & Grant, 2014). Another well documented coping mechanism is physical exercise, which

has been demonstrated to increase psychological wellbeing. Indeed, regular levels of exercise are

correlated with lower levels of depression, and those who engage in structured exercise are less

depressed and less anxious than those who do not (Mandolesi et al., 2018). Further, Sonstroem and

Morgan (1989) argue that exercise results in increased self-concept and self-esteem. Self-concept and

self-esteem are related to participation in exercise and inversely related to depression, as well as

alleviating anxiety

The coping process is unlikely to be linear, as there is limited data to support a stage model of

emotional reaction in response to life crises and coping (Silver & Wortman, 1980). In fact, evidence points

to variability in the process of coping, rather than evidence of a normative pattern amongst people (Silver

& Wortman, 1980). Such as in grief, traditional theories cannot account for those that deviate from the

expected reaction moving from high distress to low distress, as some may never be highly distressed

either at first or in subsequent stages whereas others may fail to resolve their loss no matter how much

time passes (Wortman & Silver, 1989). Next will be examined the role of stress and coping in police

officers.

Stress, Coping, and Wellbeing in Police Officers

Between 31st March 2010 and 2017, police officer strength dropped by 20,600, a 17% decrease

(Allen & Jackson, 2018). Average days lost through sickness stood at 8.86 days for police officers of a

large geographical force outside the London metropolitan area in the year ending 2009, and the sickness

absence bill for the year ending 2008 was £17.54 million, equating to 90,984 lost working days

(Houdmont, Kerr, & Randall, 2012). Organisational records show that the main reason for sickness

absence was psychological (Houdmont et al., 2012). Of 16,841 responses from a sample across all 43

federated police forces in England and Wales, three fifths reported sickness leave within the previous 12

months, and 29% of those reported at least one day lost was attributable to stress, depression or anxiety.

However, it was unlikely that those on sickness leave at the time would have responded, thus prevalence

rates are likely underestimated (Police Federation, 2017).

Police officers are exposed to more acute and chronic stressors than most other occupations (Waters & Ussery, 2007), experiencing elevated levels of stress, anxiety and irritability (Alexopoulos, Palatsidi, Tigani, & Darviri, 2014). Thus, police work has been assessed as one of the most stressful occupations worldwide (Anderson, Litzenberger, & Plecas, 2002; Anshel, 2000; Balmer, Pooley, & Cohen, 2014; Bishopp & Boots, 2014; Ma et al., 2015; Violanti, Andrew, et al., 2016; Violanti, Fekedulegn, et al., 2016). However, others have claimed that police officers are not subject to the extreme stressors the Hollywood depiction would have the public believe (Huey & Broll, 2012), suggesting that police officers are no more stressed than other groups, and that empirical research is reflective of this (Shane, 2010). Shane (2010) further argues that there is little empirical evidence to back up the assertion that policing is one of the most stressful occupations. Understandable, as it is an intuitively appealing explanation to assert (Hart, Wearing, & Headey, 1993) as the media reports on the unsavoury aspects of policing, creating the stereotype that policing is inherently dangerous and therefore stressful (Hart, Wearing, & Headey, 1994). Despite this, it is known that police officers are subject to physical violence more often than the general public (Anshel, 2000; Waters & Ussery, 2007), with one in 10 police officers having been the victim of violence within the past 12 months compared to the general workforce standing at nearer one in 100. Victimisation rates are even higher when working single crewed (Houdmont, Elliott-Davies, & Donnelly, 2018). Further, research has shown plentiful data supporting the idea that police officers may suffer the negative effects of stress, and in fact much more than the general population (Roach, Sharratt, Cartwright, & Skou Roer, 2018; Wang et al., 2010).

However, whilst the potential for violent incidents (Waters & Ussery, 2007) and facing dangers such as high speed pursuits, or arresting offenders (Anshel, 2000) are acute stressors, the literature suggests that the police administration structure and working environment are more significant factors in stress causation, than are operational ones (Alexopoulos et al., 2014). Symonds (1970) divided stressors into two categories: occupational stressors (Abdollahi, 2002); and organisational stressors (Abdollahi, 2002). Occupational stressors include such things as exposure to danger and facing the unknown, whilst organisational stressors encompass factors like managerial style and communication systems (Biggam, Power, Macdonald, Carcary, & Moodie, 1997).

Organisational stressors are "those aspects of work design and the organisation and

management of work, and their social and environmental contexts, which have the potential for causing psychological, social or physical harm" (Cox, Griffiths, & Rial-González, 2000). They relate specifically to: bureaucracy; management; organisational capacity; co-worker relationships; training; resources; leadership; supervision; and internal affairs (Shane, 2010), which are probably universal concerns across different police organisations (Houdmont et al., 2012). Organisational stressors are argued to be a better predictor of officer burnout (Abdollahi, 2002). Workload and management pressure are bigger triggers for poor mental wellbeing than trauma exposure (Mind, 2016), as well as multiple and competing job demands (Noblet, 2014). It is therefore argued that organisational stressors are the most important external causes of stress on police officers and are themselves a major source of stress (Domingues & Machado, 2017).

There are two broad categories of organisational psychosocial hazards. Bureaucracy and organisational capacity (Shane, 2010). Bureaucracy pertains to the excessive formality and routine required before any official action can be taken. This impedes effectiveness and professional autonomy. Ranks and departments create an impersonal atmosphere, which then has a deleterious effect upon the internal communication necessary to foster good decision-making and breed leadership (Shane, 2010). Bureaucracy is often mentioned in the literature as being a common stressor (Kop, Euwema, & Schaufeli, 1999), and is described as micro-management, treating officers like children and inflexible management style (Stinchcomb, 2004). This is supported by research showing that higher levels of job control and supervisor support tend to increase job satisfaction (McCreary, Fong, & Groll, 2017). Elsewhere, six police officers mentioned organisational bureaucracy as the biggest source of poor psychological wellbeing amongst police officers (Turner & Jenkins, 2018). This then predicts emotional exhaustion in officers (McCreary et al., 2017). When policies and decisions positively reflect the idea that an individual is a valuable and productive member of an organisation, performance increases (Shane, 2010). Community policing is a recognised way of reducing bureaucracy within the policing organisation, however it has been argued that window dressing has taken the place of real institutional reform (Shane, 2010).

Organisational capacity refers to the ability of complex police organisations to manage the given workload. The complex police organisation is misconceived as more able to process and deal with the

volume of work, when in fact this requires more staff, than the traditional 'on the beat' foot patrol systems of the past (Shane, 2010). The workload increases as more of the funding allocation is provided to cover the administrative overhead necessary to support the role of the modern police officer, for example recordkeeping and dispatching (Shane, 2010). This increases the division of labour and thus fewer personnel are available to complete the work to a high standard (Shane, 2010). When combined with increases in public demands and workload (Collins & Gibbs, 2003) this leads to staff shortages (Abdollahi, 2002; Noblet, Rodwell, & Allisey, 2009; Noblet, 2014; Shane, 2010; Turner & Jenkins, 2018), which are ranked as the biggest stressor by 81% of police officers. This, the Police Federation (2016) claims, is due to the pressure to attend work whilst sick to cover gaps in this provision, as a result of budget cuts, increasing the effort necessary to achieve targets, with reductions in levels of informal support that has been relied on in the past (Mind, 2016; Shiner, 2010; Turner & Jenkins, 2018). Described as presenteeism, this is the act of attending work whilst unfit to do so (Police Federation, 2016, 2017; Turner & Jenkins, 2018), which can lead to sub optimal performance by the employee (Cox et al., 2000; Thogersen-Ntoumani, Black, Lindwall, Whittaker, & Balanos, 2017). Further, 90% of officers attended work despite believing they were too ill to do so due to the state of physical health, and 65% reported one or more episodes of presenteeism due to the state of their psychological health within the previous 12 month period (Police Federation, 2016, 2017). Turner and Jenkins (2018) however contest the claim that presenteeism is a result of an altruistic duty to cover service gaps caused by financial budget reductions, and is in fact more to do with stigma avoidance when disclosing mental health problems (Turner & Jenkins, 2018). An alternative or another effect of reduction in numbers is a 'negative feedback loop', beginning with a reduced number of officers, leading to increase in welfare risks, resulting in increased injuries and stress, causing increased sickness rates, leading back to reduced numbers of police officers (Elliott-Davies, Donnelly, Boag-Munroe, & Van Mechelen, 2016). Although, the author does concede that there are other factors likely involved and this is a speculative explanation (Elliott-Davies et al., 2016). This links to a proposed theoretical model of organisational commitment and job stress, both partially mediated by job satisfaction, and the dynamic relationship between the three constructs, and represents a paradigm shift from the current models purporting a direct job stress-organisational commitment (Abdelmoteleb, 2018).

Operational stressors (Symonds, 1970) are those stressors that are inherent within policing, known as 'job content' stressors (Violanti et al., 2017), which may include exposure to traumatic events (Hunt, Jones, Hastings, & Greenberg, 2013). Examples include: witnessing or encountering death and responding to violence (Hartley, Violanti, Sarkisian, Andrew, & Burchfiel, 2013; Liberman et al., 2002; Violanti et al., 2017), responding to road traffic collisions and domestic violence (Hartley et al., 2013; Roach et al., 2018). Yet, operational stressors it is argued, can be divided further into various categories. These are: low frequency high impact stressors include shooting someone or attending the scene of a major incident such as the Hillsborough disaster; high frequency, low impact stressors, such as dealing with domestic violence or making an arrest; and vicarious trauma, prevalent in sexual offences which are frequent yet have more of an impact than routine operational stressors (Brown, Fielding, & Grover, 1999). Vicarious trauma is often felt by councillors experiencing the "emotional residue" (Dunkley, 2018, p. 32), from supporting clients and hearing their stories, such as hearing accounts from witnesses or family and friends about the death of a loved one (Roach et al., 2018). The distinction is not upheld by others, and all events are grouped into 'traumatic' events, including violence, seeing dead bodies and abused children given as examples (Violanti et al., 2017). However, trauma has been found to significantly correlate with PTSD in police officers, and increases the likelihood of psychological distress, with encounters with death being the strongest predictor for PTSD symptoms amongst a sample of US police officers (Violanti et al., 2017). Interestingly, it has been shown that exposure to routine operational stressors may have more serious impact than previously thought (Brown et al., 1999) as the authors recorded around 40% of respondents at or over the threshold value on the General Health Questionnaire (Gnambs & Staufenbiel, 2018; Goldberg & Hillier, 1979). These results indicated possible psychiatric distress at higher prevalence rates than the general population at 20% (Brown & Fielding, 1993). However, as has been pointed out, not all who experience such events are traumatised (Greenberg, Langston, & Jones, 2008), nor cope badly, finding positive ways to cope with the strains and stresses of policing (Roach et al., 2018). This may be experienced as "eustress" (Storch & Panzarella, 1996, p. 106) by the officers who attend, who enjoy the excitement of the call and negative responses may be mitigated by the excitement of the task, which can serve to release pent up anger at organisational stressors (Crank & Caldero, 1991). This concurs with ideas of subjective appraisal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), whereby a police officer may utilise

primary appraisal to come to the conclusion that a particular event is not stressful (Biggam et al., 1997), or if it is appraised as stressful, then secondary appraisal aids choosing appropriate coping strategies. The next chapter deals with stress and coping in undercover police officers.

Stress, Coping, and Wellbeing in Undercover Police Officers

A prediction of the trend of undercover police research in the United Kingdom will inevitably be focused on illegal and unethical police practices (Evans, 2015b, 2015a; Lewis & Evans, 2013); highlighted in the wake of the outing of Mark Kennedy in 2010 (Lewis & Evans, 2013; Nathan, 2017). A public inquiry was commissioned in 2015 to "investigate and report on undercover police operations conducted by English and Welsh police forces in England and Wales since 1968" (Undercover Policing Inquiry, 2018). Most recently a campaign by Lush (Stockdale, 2018), has drawn significant attention to the issue.

The current literature focuses upon specific elements of undercover policing, such as: state use of undercover tactics against typically left wing political groups (Bonino, 2018; Schlembach, 2018); proportionality of the tactic when aimed toward political activists (Lubbers, 2015); as well as debates around the effects undercover policing has on community relationships (Lambert, 2014; Spalek & O'Rawe, 2014). Outliers of this trend of research include an assessment of secrecy and accountability of undercover policing (Hadjimatheou, 2017), in respect of the undercover policing inquiry currently ongoing (Undercover Policing Inquiry, 2018); and a perspective put forward arguing offenders make themselves liable to deception and manipulation (Nathan, 2017). The working culture of undercover police officers has been recently examined however (Loftus, Goold, & Mac Giollabhui, 2015). Yet, there exists minimal research conducted on undercover police officers themselves (Kruisbergen, De Jong, & Kleemans, 2011) and therefore we know very little about the daily activities or values and beliefs that inform their decision making (Loftus et al., 2015).

Literature exploring welfare and wellbeing of undercover police officers is outdated, and primarily originates from America and Canada (Farkas, 1986; Farmer, Beehr, & Love, 2003; Girodo, 1985, 1991b, 1991a, 1997; Girodo, Deck, & Morrison, 2002; Love, Vinson, Tolsma, & Kaufmann, 2008; Miller, 2006; Pogrebin & Poole, 1993). This is a concern shared by Loftus & Goold (2012) who note that Marx's (1988)

work is over 20 years old. Further, the United States benefits from greater acceptance of undercover policing (Lambert, 2014; Loftus & Goold, 2012) than the UK (Kruisbergen et al., 2011). Thus, Loftus and Goold (2012) argue that the ground levels of undercover policing in Marx (1988) have been overlooked due to the focus on policy and practice environment rather than ethnographic accounts of undercover police officers themselves.

Undercover policing is surrounded in mystique and glamour, failing to portray the realities of what an undercover police officer does (Pogrebin & Poole, 1993). Marx (1988, p. 161) described undercover policing as "…possessing an addictive quality as [officers] came to enjoy the power, intrigue, excitement and their protected contact with illegality". Undercover police work is a challenge (Miller, 1987), allowing only the most elite officers to undertake undercover assignments for long periods of time, serving to reinforce the addictive quality that such work possesses. This idea is promulgated in Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary report (2014) where it states that "the use and extent of undercover policing is entirely dependent on sufficient police officers of the right calibre wanting to undertake this type of police work" (HMIC, 2014, p. 19).

Undercover policing is one of the most stressful assignments an officer can receive (Kowalczyk & Sharps, 2017), specifically undercover narcotics work being one of the most stressful policing jobs (Miller, 2006). Undercover police work is physically, intellectually, and emotionally demanding (Macleod, 1995; Miller, 2006). There are different stressors that belong to the domain of undercover police work that are not found in traditional policing roles, known as divergent symptoms (Kowalczyk & Sharps, 2017). Undercover police officers are prone to increased levels of physiological and psychological strain, and trauma (Love et al., 2008). Undercover police officers risk detection and violent retribution (Macleod, 1995; Miller, 2006) and are ten times more likely to be shot or shoot someone than their overt counterpart (Miller, 2006), with the most objective danger being linked to the possibility of being physically harmed should their identity be discovered (Girodo, 1985). It can therefore be a case of life or death to maintain the false personae that undercover police officers assume (Kowalczyk & Sharps, 2017). A way of ensuring that the covert identity is maintained is by allowing transgressions of the law in order to gather evidence on more serious offences. In some circumstances, officers themselves may commit crime, or engage in other morally ambiguous behaviour (Kruisbergen et al., 2011; Lambert, 2014; Loftus et al.,

2015; Marx, 1988).

The prime stressor associated with undercover policing is the fear of discovery, and this can result in anxiety felt by the undercover police officer (Miller, 2006). These officers live on the fringes and live in a heightened state of anxiety in fear of revealing their real identity (Loftus et al., 2015). Following a challenge to the cover identity, escalations in anxiety levels were documented, and especially so following an assault, however the escalation is minor and leaves no lasting effect (Macleod, 1995). Underlying neuroticism however does account for 5-10% of the observed depressive and anxiety symptoms (Girodo, 1985). Chance events can even risk the success of an operation, as one undercover officer was recognised by an old acquaintance whilst selling 'stolen goods' from the back of a van (Loftus et al., 2015).

Frequently, undercover police officers report increases in alcohol consumption, with current undercover officers reporting higher levels of alcohol use than former undercover officers as well as those without undercover experience (Love et al., 2008). It is argued that the more experience an undercover officer has, the greater the risk of alcohol and other substance abuse (French, 2003; Joh, 2009; Pogrebin & Poole, 1993). Further, undercover officers who score high in extroversion, impulsiveness and narcissism were associated with higher levels of misconduct and substance abuse, yet when also possessing high disciplined self-image, drug and alcohol abuse were the lowest for this population (French, 2003). However, it could be suggested that alcohol use is less to do with undercover policing specifically, than it is to do with policing as a whole, as police officers without undercover experience often report alcohol and substance abuse problems (Kowalczyk & Sharps, 2017). It is frequently argued that alcohol use is culturally accepted in police forces, serving a bonding function (Powell, Cassematis, Benson, Smallbone, & Wortley, 2014).

As described above, there are four modes of deception utilised by undercover police officers to protect their identity from being revealed as an undercover police officer: appearance manipulation; prior rehearsal; physical; and verbal diversion (Jacobs, 1992b). In England however, such deception practices have gone beyond proportionality to what was being investigated, specifically by the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) (Nathan, 2017). Such techniques were the use of dead children's identities, as well as reported instances of officers fathering children whilst working undercover in order to build

secure legends to avert suspicion (Hadjimatheou, 2017; HMIC, 2014; Lubbers, 2015; Schlembach, 2018; Spalek & O'Rawe, 2014). Within the SDS, out of 106 covert identities utilised by the 146 officers employed, 42 were the identities of dead children (Bonino, 2018) which was "an accepted practice, well known to the highest levels of the Home Office" according to Bob Lambert (Channel 4 News, 2013).

The consequences of undercover policing also affect the families of the officers themselves, as they can often be forgotten about, as the officer places the operation as a higher priority. Consequences can include loss of self-esteem which develops into depression, anger and then demanding attention and recognition by the officer. The same can also be replicated by the affected family, as a sign of their own private suffering. Although neglect is the most frequent problem, abuse can occur as well (Hibler, 1994). Further, isolation can occur from family members, which can result in post-operation maladjustment to the family (Kowalczyk & Sharps, 2017). The family can be a source of stress for the undercover officer, who struggles to understand the changes in the physical appearances and behavioural tendencies that the operative may go through (French, 2003). One analysis indicates that officers working alone were less able to associate with their family than were officers who worked in groups (Farkas, 1986) although the reasons why are not stated. 33% of former undercover officers reported feelings of anxiety at being unable to discuss their assignments with their friends and family (Farkas, 1986). Current undercover officers reported higher frequencies of marital problems than did former undercover officers, 27.6% and 14.2% respectively (Farkas, 1986). However, this contrasts with findings that state former undercover officers reported higher frequencies of both marital stress and other family problems, 60.5% and 30.5% respectively, than did the current undercover officers, 45.3% and 13.4% respectively (Kowalczyk & Sharps, 2017).

It is argued that the media paints a dramatic picture of the psychological changes, portraying multiple personality disorders (Girodo, 1985). An example of this exists in the famous example of Lieutenant Clifton James' impersonation of Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery, who stated "…as I was soon to find out, you can't *become* a great personality as I had done and then suddenly reverse the process at a moment's notice" (James, 1957, p. 167). Therefore, the isolation, stress and mental strain maintaining an undercover identity can lead to an officer exceeding the bounds of authorised criminality and participate in an offence as an ordinary offender, and it is not uncommon for undercover officers to

'go native' and believe in their own fictitious identities as described above (Joh, 2009). This is reported in Undercover (Lewis & Evans, 2013), whereby Mike Chitty, an undercover operative went rogue and returned to his undercover identity once his undercover assignment had finished.

Another notable finding is that reappearances of an alter-identity in an undercover agent are more likely to occur when predispositions to dissociative experiences are featured in an agent, along with private mental rehearsals of having a false persona (Girodo, 1985; Girodo et al., 2002). A salient feature of more frequent reappearances of the false identity appears to be physical changes to the appearance, as changes accompany the officer both inside and outside of the false identity context (Girodo et al., 2002). This is troubling, as one study of undercover officers in the United States notes that there are four modes of deception used by officers, two of which are given above as examples in causing dissociative experiences: prior rehearsal, and appearance manipulation (Jacobs, 1992b). This concern is shared, as there is a frequent need for undercover officers to develop false personae and to engage in repeating that corresponding behaviour, which could hardly fail to develop habit systems in the undercover officer, which can re-emerge outside of the operational context (Kowalczyk & Sharps, 2017).

Despite this, it has been argued that there is a lack of evidence for such conditions amongst undercover police officers and the general trend is that psychiatric malfunction is not the norm. In Macleod (1995), there were no recorded instances of psychoticism, and there was rare termination on mental health grounds. In fact, 60% of the participants viewed undercover police work as positive and gained satisfaction from engaging in undercover work, seeing it as a chance for personal growth and viewed it as the "ultimate challenge" (Macleod, 1995, p. 242). This is in contrast to Farkas (1986), who found that there is a clear indication of a variety of psychiatric symptomatology associated with undercover policing and that for a period of time these persist after the operation ends. Explanations exist to mediate the two findings, as it has been found that UC work features several buffers to clinical symptomatology, such as utilisation of denial as a coping strategy, where officers deny or fail to consider the possibility of physical harm should their true identity be discovered (Love et al., 2008). Further, negative effects can be buffered or even countered by support mechanisms provided by the job itself or the work environment (Love et al., 2008). Further, in Love et al. (2008), former UCO's reported significantly higher frequencies of almost all the listed clinical symptoms than both current undercover

officers and those officers without undercover experience. This is in contrast to Farkas (1986), who found that reports of clinical symptoms appeared to be higher in frequency for current officers than former UC officers. In concurrence with this finding, Girodo (1991b) notes that 8% of preoperational, 26% of active operational, and 17% post operational officers were at risk of psychological disturbance, and the severity and shape of symptoms were almost identical to psychiatric outpatients. An explanation of these different findings across the literature could potentially be due to the data gathering process, as interviewing with a recorder, without one, and the use of questionnaires have provided sometimes drastically different results (Kowalczyk & Sharps, 2017).

Reintegration of the police officer from the undercover part of their career into the more traditional, overt policing role is also documented to cause anxiety, alongside feelings of loneliness and suspiciousness (Farkas, 1986; Pogrebin & Poole, 1993). This is in part due to sometimes seeing themselves as part of the elite, and having special skills that are useful only in undercover work and feel like they are wasted in traditional routine policing (Pogrebin & Poole, 1993). This is in concurrence with Love et al., (2008) who argue that reintegration of UCO's into more traditional police roles may in itself be stressful. Further, Farkas (1986) reported that 42% of former UCO's experienced problems associated with the transition into the traditional police role as well one third reporting negative changes in their social relations, as well as feeling stress at being with their family and friends in public. Girodo (1985) notes that this role transition may cause a delayed reaction in experiencing clinical symptoms. However, this anxiety can be reduced by framing undercover work as one aspect of their career (Kowalczyk & Sharps, 2017), and to include in the planning of the undercover assignment a post-assignment role to utilise those skills as a buffer. An example of this is the redeployment of Mike Chitty, who just after his undercover operation had ended, was deployed to routine desk duties and intelligence gathering with which co-workers noticed he was becoming increasingly bored (Lewis & Evans, 2013). Marx (1995) argues that the implications of the above research means that there is a greater need for increased vigilance the longer an operation goes on and the greater the accumulated undercover experience of an undercover officer, as well as important strategies of selecting in and selecting out.

Research Aims

To explore stressful elements of undercover policing, and to understand and interpret coping strategies used to mitigate stress.

Methodology

The research design of this project employed semi-structured interviews (Appendix One) on a sample of 5 former undercover police officers from various police forces, in order to understand their experiences, highlighting examples of stressful factors, and coping strategies used to ameliorate stress as a result of undercover policing. The data were analysed using a thematic analysis devised by Braun and Clarke (2006). The research was designed in such a way to utilise past research and findings to guide the interview schedule, yet allowing sufficient room for new or divergent findings to be unearthed (Gray, 2014).

The methodology is based upon an interpretivist paradigm, whereby the author assumes the ontological position that reality is subjectively understood by the individual actor and thus informs the research design for the project (Tracy, 2012). Thus, in order to understand how undercover policing can affect those who are directly involved, in this case, undercover police officers, the researcher must attempt to understand the concept by understanding it from their points of view. It is the purpose of this study to reveal those meanings attached to their experiences, as facts and values cannot be separated (Walliman, 2017). This is in contrast to a positive paradigm, whereby knowledge is derived using the scientific method in order to discover a reality that can actually be measured (Walliman, 2017). Ontologically, positivism proposes that things exist independently of the perceiver and are as they appear to be, thus adopting a "naïve realism" (Humphrey, 2013, p. 5). Therefore, at the level of epistemology there is a schism between the 'knower' and the 'known'.

The interpretivist position of this research foregrounds a qualitative methodology. Qualitative methods encompass collection and analysis techniques in order to provide rich and in-depth description to a phenomena and to build theory as well as to test it, and the main benefits of such techniques are to

gain an understanding into complex processes, discover new relationships and variables, and to

demonstrate the importance of social context (Shah & Corley, 2006). Qualitative research has at its

disposal formal and systematic data collection techniques and modes of analysis to ensure the

trustworthiness of their work is incontrovertible. The quantitative methodology however is predicated on

an ability to remain unbiased, measure knowledge, find causal relationships, and to aggregate and

analysis data objectively (Abusabha & Woelfel, 2003). Therefore, a quantitative methodology would deter

an in depth analysis if the variables were rigidly operationalised, as they would be in a laboratory

experiment, and simply would not allow the researcher to delve into the data provided by each participant

(Rudestam & Newton, 2007; Smith, Todd, & Waldman, 2009). However, the data gathered here is

subjective and therefore in order to explore complex concepts of human experiences must entail

subjective interpretation of the data. The collection method provided opportunities to clarify and probe,

thus the knowledge is co-constructed between the author and the participant (Rapley, 2018).

The interview schedule was inspired by Lazarus and Folkman's work on stress and coping

(Lazarus, 2006; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), as well as influenced by the ways of coping checklist, a

quantitative tool (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988a; Lazarus, 2006; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). However, the

specific aim of the research is to gain an understanding of how undercover police officers feel they were

affected, what for them was stressful, how they coped and how well they think their strategies helped

them cope, which could lead to a variety of opinions and beliefs on this subject (Vaismoradi, Turunen, &

Bondas, 2013).

In the context of this research, the epistemological and methodological assumptions and their

implications translates to using the semi-structured interview, created from current literature and previous

findings that build upon individuals experiences and examples of stress and coping in their former

undercover policing careers to form conclusions, and is thus an iterative process (Tracy, 2012). The

primary reason for choosing the semi-structured interview rather than ethnography or field observation, is

because both would largely be impractical for the purposes of the research aims. The semi-structured

interview unfolds the meaning of peoples' experiences and their beliefs and values (Mann, 2016). This

method allows the researcher to prompt, rephrase questions and make changes according to the specific

situation of that interview (Galletta & Cross, 2013) and thus enhances validity, painting a truthful picture of

the accounts of the participants interviewed (ten Have, 2004).

It was decided that a thematic analysis was the most appropriate method of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2015; Clarke, Braun, & Clarke, 2017). A thematic analysis is a method of identifying themes, created from commonly occurring data extracts from within the data set (Clarke et al., 2017), in this case, interviews with former undercover police officers. Researchers using this method can provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of the data (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The theme contains codes with common points of reference in order to obtain a common thread throughout the participants' accounts (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016). The main strength of this type of qualitative analysis is its flexibility and does not work within rigid rules (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke et al., 2017), allowing either breadth or depth to be included in the analysis, and is an accessible form of research (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Therefore the process is not being too constrained by prevalence of data supporting the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), although to ensure quality in a thematic analysis, an anecdotal approach should be avoided, instead to ensure the coding process is thorough and inclusive of the data corpus (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An important way of ensuring trustworthiness of a thematic analysis is to explicitly state why and how the process was carried out (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). The negatives associated with thematic analysis stems from positivist critiques of qualitative methodology, as being not rigorous or systematic (Chowdhury, 2014), whereas Braun and Clarke (2006) attribute this to poorly conducted analysis or inappropriate research questions for the method rather than the method itself.

Participant recruitment was a central aspect in terms of research methodology. The researcher utilised criterion and snowball sampling, the former chosen in order to recruit participants with expert knowledge and experience (Moser & Korstjens, 2018) of undercover policing, however another criteria was that they were former police officers due to limited access to current undercover officers. The latter was chosen due to the difficulty in recruiting, and so one participant directed the researcher onto others who fit the criteria and also helped to gain trust if directed by someone known to them (Glesne, 2016). Five participants were interviewed, justifiable due in part to the phenomena in question, as well as the ongoing political situation which means participants willing, and legally able to be interviewed were extremely limited. The police itself is known to be a closed community to researchers (Cram, 2018; Fox &

Lundman, 1974; Lundman & Fox, 1978; Rigakos & Worth, 2011), however, undercover police work is an

especially unique and secretive occupation (Farmer et al., 2003; Jacobs, 1992b). Therefore, current

academic research and access is extremely limited and difficult to ascertain (Kowalczyk & Sharps, 2017).

This study therefore makes an important and original contribution to undercover policing research by

offering fresh insights into the lives of former undercover police officers, analysing the effects that this

work can have, and most importantly by suggesting further avenues that can be pursued.

Due to the nature of the project, some particular and important ethical concerns became

apparent, notably informed consent (British Society of Criminology, 2015). The current climate appears to

be uninviting for former undercover officers to speak out (Evans, 2017; Schlembach, 2016), and it was

therefore important to gain informed consent from each participant, where participants were provided with

all information necessary to decide whether or not to participate through the use of an Information sheet

(Appendix Two) and a Consent form (Appendix Three). However, informed consent can be controversial

and especially difficult to get and maintain (Comstock, 2013), and is in fact a negotiation throughout the

project which also affects access, as noted in previous research focusing on the police (Rowe, 2007).

Formal consent was given after reassurance of the project aims, and that strict ethical guidelines

and principles had been adhered to, and further reassurances that the questions were not designed to

uncover any criminal activity other than that which would be expected by undercover police officers in

certain types of investigations. For example, it was acceptable to the researcher that to investigate drug

dealing, the participants may have been asked to purchase various illegal drugs. Questions were also

asked of the researcher in this project of whether publishing other than as part of the thesis was possible,

to which the answer was honest in that should that be a possibility, then informed consent will further be

gained at that time. Further, it was made clear that participants could withdraw their participation (Wiles,

2012) with no ramifications, and once the interviews had concluded, it was made sure that participants

would be provided with a transcript of the interviews. Also, participants were provided with lists of quotes

that may have highlighted a specific theme in the analysis, again to ensure that nothing said was

misrepresented. These measures, examples of good practice in qualitative research, ensured

safeguarding of the data in order to protect their identities, as well as to ensure validity of the data.

Confidentiality is another central principle to research ethics (Wiles, 2012), and is a matter that

pertains to this research also. Confidentiality is protecting identifiable information about a participant and such information will not be repeated (Wiles, 2012). A comprehensive risk management plan included mitigating harm from data loss and psychological harm, with signposting to support services in the latter case. In cases of safeguarding, only then would confidentiality be broken. In order to protect privacy and prevent breaches of confidentiality in this research, steps were taken to ensure participants could 'vet' data provided to ensure they are comfortable. This was in conjunction with steps taken to remove references to precise locations and anonymising participants by removing names.

Findings and Analysis

The application of the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to the data gathered from the participants has allowed the researcher to understand what stress undercover police officers deal with, as well as interpreting the data as to paint a broad picture of the effects of these stressors upon the wellbeing of those officers. Not all themes interpreted are as equally prevalent as each other, owing to varied experiences of each former undercover police officer. The findings are thus strongly linked to the data themselves, and as such, are not fitted into a pre-existing framework of stress and coping of undercover police officers.

The findings of the analysis in some ways is concurrent with the literature, yet in others indicate differences to previous studies, and that some stressors may have been overestimated. Initially, data were grouped into four themes (Appendix Four) and were then rearranged and grouped into three final themes (Appendix Five). 'Maintaining undercover persona' was not supported strongly enough by the data to warrant its own theme, therefore becoming a sub-theme in within 'risks to wellbeing' (Identity Stressors).

Risks to Wellbeing

Risks to Wellbeing has been split into sub-themes *Safety* and *Identity Stressors*; the former analysed extracts related to feelings of personal safety, the risks faced by undercover police officers, and the dangerous situations they may be faced with and the stress this caused. The latter is related to risks towards the UCO's emotional and psychological wellbeing such as, deception and feelings of guilt and

shame, as well as the effects of maintaining their undercover identities.

Safety

As mentioned previously, the prime stressor of an undercover police officer is the fear of having their undercover identity discovered (Miller, 2006). This sentiment resonates with each of the participants interviewed in this study. Others feel the anxiety associated with this specific stressor more than others, and some have had their fears justified having been victimised whilst undercover . This is related to the idea that this fear of discovery is perhaps more state anxiety than it is trait anxiety (Spielberger & Krasner, 1988). The consequences of being discovered is the threat of serious violence, not only this, the threat of discovery can cause feelings of anxiety towards the integrity of the case. If the identity is discovered, then the case can collapse and the undercover officer responsible for that investigation can feel guilt, and anxiety at this prospect. This can cause panic and worry for the undercover officer as described by UCO1, a female officer utilising covert observation tactics, who recognised the element of:

> "…being seen, recognised, so whilst you're trying to do your best at work, you're still kind of I suppose looking over your shoulder and panicking a bit"
> And

> "…especially when I suppose you're driving at home at night you're looking into your mirrors to see if there's anyone like following"

This is quite the same experience as Clifton James, who impersonated Montgomery, as it is detailed that "At times when I was off duty, I had the uneasy suspicion that I was being followed and watched. It is a most disconcerting experience" (James, 1957, p. 51). UCO3 concurs. A female officer, she was tasked with purchasing drugs at an address under the persona of a student whilst wearing a microphone. She states:

> "…you've got the adrenaline going but, you know, in the back of your mind there is that sort of, if it kicks off or if they find the mics on me because they tend to search you, how am I going to get out of this? Although there were people on standby in cars around the corner, it was extremely risky. In hindsight I wouldn't have done it."

> And

> "…it's almost like you bet on them having a gun or a knife somewhere on the premises when you do it, so it's a lot more violent and a lot more risk involved."

So then, whilst no victimisation occurred, it is clear that the fear of discovery was linked to the fear of becoming a victim of violence. This fear of violence was regularly expressed by most participants, and in this case, it is due to the added danger of weapons. This leads to behaviour such as looking over ones back and looking in the mirror. UCO3 explained the additional risk of being sexually assaulted as a female, and that the risks are different than they are for males. Carrying on with the investigation, as opposed to leaving during a drug deal if the risk becomes too much can actually become dangerous for that UCO, as it could arouse suspicion if at first, they want to purchase drugs and then they wish to forego the entire transaction. UCO3 illustrates this in a scenario in which she was one of four female UCO's sent into a nightclub, tasked with purchasing ecstasy and cocaine:

> "…he went off and got the cocaine and come back, and he was like, 'I can't do it here come to the toilets', at that point I was like shit I shouldn't really be doing this, and again looking back, if I went 'no, no, no, I'm not doing that', I could put myself at risk because they'd be going, 'why?' because you've persisted on wanting this…but again, the thought of getting the dealers and the drug dealers in the place arrested outweighed my risk."

UCO5, a male former officer describes a situation in which he was victimised and was aware prior to this the risks that an undercover police officer may face. He states:

> "So, he starts shouting to his mate, and only a few weeks before that a colleague had his camera found and he'd been beaten and left for dead up in Leeds. So, I was under no doubt what risk I was at, and certainly these people were clearly high-end vicious gangsters."

This situation was one of the situations in which he felt most vulnerable, with the end result of him being chased down by the targeted offender in a car, but it was the situation in which he was closest to being killed. He states:

> "They must have missed me by two meters I would say, one or two meters. I've no doubt what they were trying to do. They were screeching and squealing around the roundabout."

Afterwards,

> "The intel guy came back in and he was laughing, and he said, 'I don't know why he didn't just shoot you, there was plenty of intel that there's a gun in the car'. So, we had a laugh at that."

When initially challenged by the offender, it was because the camera in the button hole of the jacket he was wearing was visible to the person accompanying the target and UCO5, in order to buy

himself some space between himself and the target, used verbal aggression in order to reduce the suspicion that he is in fact a police officer and he reported:

> "So, I just started swearing at him 'what you fucking doing picking at my fucking clothes, it's not even my fucking jacket what you on about, I borrowed it off Jackie this morning, fuck off picking at my clothes' and just launched into this tirade at him, which stunned him a bit, he wasn't quite expecting this."

This method of reducing the suspicion is reminiscent of an attempt to do the same, reported in Jacobs (1992a), where a drug user requested to see the trail marks (injection sites for heroin, usually on the arm) of an undercover officer who shouts back "Hey mother f--er, I don't ask about your marks. I shoot it in my f--ing dick, because I don't want my parole officer coming down on me for using again. What the hell does it matter to you where I shoot. Just give me the stuff, or I'll buy from someone else. You must be a cop anyway, you're so damn suspicious" (Jacobs, 1992a, p. 1305). It is clear that for most the threat of imminent violence can be a cause of the stress and worry, along with feelings of vulnerability around their feelings of personal safety. This is linked to findings by Girodo (1985), that the most objective danger is the potential to be physically harmed by those they are investigating should their undercover identities be discovered. Quite clearly, in the event of the undercover officer having been discovered as a police officer, it is certainly a case of life or death (Kowalczyk & Sharps, 2017). However, the extract provided above is part of an interesting discourse that the violence and threat of harm was not the most immediate worry for UCO5, as evidenced through the use of humour around the situation and actually found he coped quite well with the dangerous situations in which he faced, although he did recognise the potential harm, he explains:

> "I used to be very pleased with myself after something which would be preferably dangerous was just how well I coped with it. It seemed to me water off a duck's back that yeah, I could shake, I'd be pale, but I'd quickly recover…"

Yet, further in the interview with UCO5, we see the cruelty, and brutal treatment face by the officer, and we then begin to understand the consequences of the extreme stress UCO5 is subject to:

> "The imminent violence all the way through that six months period was incredible, all the time these are maniacal individuals…the main guy was, according to intelligence, was responsible seven different murders…"

And

> "He was, was an extremely violent individual, so I knew this by reputation, but once they snatched me, they were suspicious of me, they snatched me and took me to the racecourse there and stripped me naked at gunpoint."

This is demonstrated on one occasion where the officer planned a meeting with this gangster, who requested UCO5 to meet at a car wash and was struggling to understand the name of the requested location. He goes on to say:

> "So, I got to the car wash, in this sort of fight or flight situation, where mind and body is saying you really don't want to be here, this is stupid, but my operational requirement was that I stand there and wait, and it went on for about twenty minutes."

The extracts presented here lay credence to claims purporting that the repercussions sustained from engaging in undercover work may occur post operationally (Kowalczyk & Sharps, 2017) rather than surfacing at the time of the event, and that it was only after visiting a car wash multiple times, inducing a period of reflection, was UCO5 able to trace some causes of this anxiety when facing danger quite a distance in the past.

Both UCO3, infiltrating the nightclub, and UCO5, meeting the gangster at the car wash, both placed above their own safety the requirements of the investigation, and UCO3 was aware at the time that the situation she was in was completely unsafe for her to carry on. However, there is a decision made by both as to the risk being outweighed by the operational demands. That at all costs, the investigation must proceed.

This resonates with concerns of other UCO's in the study. Whilst this anxiety is initially due to the fear of discovery, the consequences are that the case will be blown. This results in a fear of being stigmatised and feeling ashamed. The undercover operation has an immense sense of importance attached to it, they are seen as distinct, special (Miller, 2006), only for elite officers (Pogrebin & Poole, 1993). Therefore, the consequences of failing to maintain the cover story, thus blowing the case, as UCO1 highlights, are perceived as severe:

> "…but also, that you're worried for your supervisors, thinking oh you don't want to mess this job up, you know like you don't want to blow the whole aim of what you're doing."

In order to preserve one's safety, and the integrity of the entire operation, the undercover persona then must be effectively bulletproof (Band & Sheeman, 1999), and the undercover officer must make their persona believable to the target of the operation in order to avoid being the victim of violence. This is effectively summed up by UCO2, who states:

> "…so, you're trying to stay in that role to make it more believable...it has to be believable, you have to be that person. It's one of them, if you're not, you're in danger…"

One way to do this, is through legend building and making their face more known to offenders and making themselves seen as a trustworthy person. This is illustrated by UCO5:

> "In order to manipulate them I made myself out to be a travelling shoplifter. I got them, as legend building, I got them to introduce me to all the stolen property handlers in the area. So, who to take baby clothes to, who to take spirits to, electrical goods all those kinds of things. This is all legend building. What I was doing, was for them to do the introductions I was passing some goods to them, so I was winning them over with presents."

Although this became increasingly difficult to do in the face of ever-increasing violence precipitated by the war on drugs, as it became more and more difficult to infiltrate organised criminals through the use of undercover tactics. This is explained by UCO2:

> "You have to be good, cos they know exactly what to look out for. So, I would say yeah, it's massively changed because the gangsters know the tactics, so you have to try different things, which is more dangerous now for UCOs because they become more realistic than anybody has ever been, that's where the danger is, where do you stop?"

Therefore, the tactics used by the police must always change, always improve in making their identities more believable. This however, only increases the danger towards the police officers themselves and increases the risks towards those the officers perceive as vulnerable, who ends up being the person to lead an undercover police officer to the organised criminal's door, as vividly described by UCO5:

> "All that was happening was...the drugs war is an arms race. I was at the frontline with the cutting-edge tactics, and, the pushback is more violence because the most successful gangster is the one who can successfully intimidate a community into not grassing them and also who can successfully intimidate the community to make it really difficult for undercover cops."

It is interesting when one supposes that in the drug world, where the vulnerable are just as

terrified and at risk of violence as the undercover police officer investigating them, how one can actually make it close enough to investigate those higher up. UCO5 explains how he had to learn a cover story on top of his cover story provided by the police, in order to gain access to high level gangsters:

> "[Redacted] was terrified clearly, of introducing me. He made me rehearse a cover story, which is really weird when you're running a legend, running a cover story for someone to try to teach you another one is really strange."

Relating to literature surround psycho-education and support for undercover officers, for one to be supported in maintaining their identity as a police officer, means learning to distinguish that from his undercover persona, however what then does this mean when another identity is introduced as in the case above? This leads to a clear implication of the need for anyone supporting the undercover officer in terms of psychoeducation for the officer to refrain from actually doing so, and for the person whose role this is, is a hard truth to accept (Kowalczyk & Sharps, 2017). For an undercover police officer to pause and reflect upon the future ramifications that engaging in a false identity will have upon them may prove folly, and in the clearest possible terms they may not be alive to suffer those consequences.

UCO2 was also challenged when entering a flat alone, where he was locked in and talked his way out of being searched, which was quite fortunate as he had recording equipment on his person. As Band and Sheeman (1999) state, in order to defeat the fear of being discovered, the officer must be provided with adequate backstopping or an alias for the officers, yet in this case, had the offenders decided to search UCO2, no amount of backstopping or the provision of an effective alias would have helped him. On the other hand, this may have been the very thing that prevented the search. Interestingly though, he describes more worry for his safety when he himself was stopped by a group of police officers, and was swung up against a wall, and he states:

> "I was more worried about cops. I know I wasn't going to go to prison, but what if I didn't have that get out of jail card, what could have happened?"

UCO2 was less fearful of drug dealers in his undercover work:

> "Most drug dealers treated me okay. Only one little bastard who slapped me across the head once. An 18-year-old dealer, wannabee gangster, slapped me right across the face for standing in the wrong place."

This perhaps suggests dissociation from the police identity, frequently described in the theme

Identity Stressors. Rather than an explicit assertion of overidentifying with the offenders he targeted, it's more a statement of detachment and separation from his true role as a police officer, signified by a state of worry and panic about the consequences of being arrested, even though he knows he has a 'get out of jail card'.

A final, important point that must be made is that it matters not whether a specific threat is imaginary or real, but that in either case both can lead to emotional discomfort (Band & Sheeman, 1999) either through actually having their identity challenged and facing danger, or whether it is a future oriented worry and feelings of anxiety (Renner, Hock, Bergner-Köther, & Laux, 2016). This is evidenced with negative feelings such as worry of bumping into the targeted offenders in the supermarket, as described by UCO1, who lived quite close to the area of operations. Further, worry and anxiety manifesting itself in direct behaviour changes causing one to look back as if one were being followed. This is justified by the thought that if the police could watch the offender, then there is nothing to stop the offender from watching the police. The worry and anxiety for others manifest differently in each former officer. For some, these symptoms re-emerge long after the event had passed, yet at the time they happened, the officers manged to maintain the appearance that they were coping well with the threats and the violence. Either way, to preserve their own safety, the UCO must absolutely and thoroughly convince the target that they themselves are an offender, so as to leave no doubt that they are who they say they are.

Overall, a recommendation to reduce the risks is difficult to provide, as naturally undercover policing is dangerous, in that facing criminals who possess the cruellest ability and tools necessary to inflict immense violence comes with its risk. As has been said previously, the success of the tactic forces offenders to change their tactics, often resulting in increasingly tremendous violence usually perpetrated against the most vulnerable. One could argue that drug law reform possesses the answer to reducing control of the illicit substance market out of the hands of organised criminals, yet this in itself as a viewpoint cannot be fully subscribed to within the confines of the research aims, and more focused data must be gathered specifically on drug crime and undercover policing. Other implications include limiting the scope and scale of undercover police operations where being on one's own without the immediate ability to utilise police backup would not be as risky.

Identity Stressors

This sub-theme will focus on the consequences of maintaining a fictitious undercover identity, and the risks associated with role over-identification, depersonalisation, and dissociation. This section benefits from vivid extracts that capture the thoughts and feelings around the work that the participants did.

Immediately, one can point to an example of where maintaining an undercover identity does not in itself cause negative consequences for an undercover officer. As UCO3 describes:

"Well I'm really good at pretending to be somebody else. I'm sort of quite creative person, I can think on my feet, it's one of those things, you have to be a different person…"

And then interestingly states.

"Yeah, I took on that...almost like schizophrenia, I totally went into that character which is completely different to on the beat police work. I'd say they're both stressful and both can be high risk, but, actually the...it was quite good fun…"

So, whilst described above as almost like schizophrenia, taken to mean in this case pretending to be someone else, is quite a profound way to describe that experience and is quite a powerful metaphor for the way she had to act when she was undercover. Interestingly, schizophrenia has previously been used to describe the effect of maintaining a false persona by an FBI agent, reportedly unable to distinguish between his real identity and the false identity (Girodo, 1985). Although, the use of the words 'took on' in this case implies that it was a choice, or it was an intentional act to *become* someone else, and from context, UCO Three was able to distinguish between the two identities she played. The reverse is also implied in that the process to *become* someone else, can be just as easily initiated in order to reverse the process when necessary. That role ambiguity is due to the suppression of the true persona, allowing the false drug dealer/user persona to surface and take precedence, similar to other UCO's (Farmer et al., 2003):

"I could leave it there, that's Lucy that's not me and could switch off like that."

In order to avoid reappearances of the undercover persona outside of the operational context, UCO3 attributes the concern, the worry, and the anxiety of the undercover operation to the undercover persona performing that role (Lucy), rather than allowing these feelings to be felt by her true persona.

This suggests a tactic not described by Jacobs (1992b), that here there is a true separation between the undercover persona and the 'true' persona she plays outside of that context. To frame the problems as belonging to 'Lucy', she effectively avoids the negative feelings as the negative feelings do not belong to her true self.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for UCO2, who struggles with forming an identity after many years of playing other false personae and different identities. These were based on people he hated, so that as he continued to play them, the more he overidentified with that role and saw himself become the person he hated:

> "A lot of the stresses was because of the different identities I had to create. From, obviously, from the moment I created the identity which had to be believable, from the minute I was leaving my home address, to the minute I come home, my head was pounding, thinking about the cover story, thinking about what I had to do, and thinking about the police side, and making sure that does not conflict, and cause problems for the drug user identity."

Straight away, it is noticeable in comparing UCO2 and UCO3, that the latter was able to maintain that distinction between the identities that she played, whereas the former did not maintain this distinction. The role he identifies as is a real person, and UCO2 believes that if he does not fully engross himself in this transformation process and truly believes himself to be a drug addict, then he believes his life would be in danger. Having already been the target of offenders in the past, resulting in a contract being placed on his life, it is plain to see why he throws all of his energy in internalising the undercover persona, including the stigma placed upon drug users:

> "I looked like a piece of shit, I was a piece of shit."

In explaining when his head was "pounding", it can be implied that private mental rehearsals are taking place in order to bolster the drug user identity, however this only causes further harm and role overidentification:

> "I would say the father role was angry with the drug user role, because my children didn't want me to take them anywhere or take them to parents evening or anything like that...so there was a conflict between the identities then...so you...to be three/four people all at once, and it's hard to break off and like completely cut off like when you walk through the front door, right I'm the father role again, cos you're always thinking about the job what you've just done or you've been out on the streets, or what you're going to be doing tomorrow, so you're trying to stay in that role to make it more believable"

Clearly, the identities are present in the same sphere and now conflict with each other. The father role, implied to be a role that is protective, nurturing, and caring is naturally at odds with a drug user. Whilst not stating that drug users are naturally horrible people, the use of words that he describes himself as when he undertakes this role, it is clear how that would conflict with a father figure. This description is similar to the concept of 'undercover Stockholm syndrome' (Band & Sheeman, 1999; Marx, 1988; Miller, 2006), where that loyalty and commitment is questioned. The father role is questioning himself as to why he would let a drug user be around his children, putting them in danger, creating that barrier between himself and the family:

> "So, a drug user, walking the streets are thinking I'm just a piece of shit, just a drug user, but it's not them is it, it's just how it's happened."

And

> "I think it's becoming that identity, becoming that person, you're believing yourself to be. I was someone who lived round here who I hated, That's who I based my first one on, I hated him, he was a bastard, he used to go pick on all the kids but he never got in trouble with police, so I had to...I became him, I became this person I hated, and I believed in myself that I was this person."

The undercover police officer must be fully engaged in their false persona if they are to be believed that they are in fact who they say they are. A succinct description of this process is found in 'I was Monty's Double' (C. James, 1957, p. 133) as Clifton James 'becomes' Monty, "If I had not been able to perform this psychological trick I should never have been able to do what I did." Even if the reverse were prioritised, the wellbeing of the officer taking precedence over the operational demands of the situation, a sacrifice is being made, of either the mind, or of their own safety. UCO2 describes his tactic when asked about whether he used coping strategies:

> "No, keep going, filling my brain with shit. I was hypervigilant, with lot's going on in my head. What better way to be as a drug user? It was perfect. So, more chaos the better, I was more realistic."

Whilst the tactic of taking on a real identity, in the form of literally taking on the identity of dead children (Lewis & Evans, 2013; Schlembach, 2016, 2018; Undercover Policing Inquiry, 2018) is a used one for certain elements of undercover policing, it is not reported on in the literature of examples of where undercover officers have modelled there persona of someone that they know and hate, or even on

someone else. Quite possibly, the salient feature of the role-identification can be found in UCO2's

admission to being diagnosed with PTSD prior to his selection as an undercover officer. The PTSD was

due to his previous experience of investigating drug crimes:

> "I think I chose to probably go into that kind of role, that undercover role, because unbeknown to myself, I was already suffering from PTSD from when I had a contract out on my life."

He then states.

> "…cos to me, the person who was receiving the death threats, was the police officer. I wanted to become this drugs user, to kind of distance myself from the police, I think I was probably doing that in a strange kind of thing, to like, right well if I'm a drugs user, I won't get threatened as a police officer. It's quite a confusing thing."

So, an interesting comparison can be made to UCO3, in that attributing different experiences to

different personas, UCO2 does this as a form of avoidance, and as a self-preservation mechanism. So,

recognising that his determination to become someone else, is in order to avoid becoming a victim of

violence, as a result of his investigations into drug crimes. The more he believed this to be true, the more

likely it was he would remain safe.

There appears to be a complete disorganisation in the different identities that UCO2 has and

describes, even relating back to childhood and previous occupations. The below extract is consistent with

descriptions of dissociative identity disorder, as described by Girodo et al. (2002), where a distinctly

separate identity takes control of a person's perceptions and behaviour:

> "I could wake up in the morning, and looking in the mirror, I see a different person sometimes every day, I can either be looking at the drug user, or the cop, or anything...I was an engineer, looking at an engineer. That's how strange it is."

There is a moment of realisation in the interview where UCO2 describes a scenario in which his

family ask him to deal with drug dealers living near him and contact the police to remove them, yet they

could not understand why he would not:

> "No because I'd not told them, they thought I were a cop... that's weird that isn't it cos I've just said they thought I was a cop, but I was. I just said that as if I weren't. Can you see how clear it was? In my mind then I wasn't a cop. In my mind I wasn't, weird that isn't it. I was out of it then, completely."

Ultimately, the conversation takes us to the present day:

"And now I don't know who I am…I'm not...I'm nobody, you know what I mean? I can say I'm a husband and father, that's a good identity to have isn't it? I'm happy with them two kind of identities…"

Although this is an outlier in terms of that dissociation from the police identity and role-overidentification, a finding correlating with Powell et al., (2014), it is a possible consequence of what can happen when the undercover officer believes they are the persona that they are playing. This has caused severe stress, anxiety, depression and physical health problems for this UCO2, and is as a result of the success of his manipulated physical appearance and mental rehearsal as well as the diagnosis of PTSD that has contributed to his desire to relinquish the identity of that police officer, in becoming a drugs user; a finding corresponding with Girodo et al., (2002). Once that identity was no longer needed, and after the conflicts between that identity and the father role, there were simply none left to attach to. This fictional extract resonates with the experience of UCO2, "…but I acted the paralytic Professor so well, that now I can't leave off. So that when I am among friends, and have no need at all to disguise myself, I still can't help speaking slow and wrinkling my forehead—just as if it were my forehead" (Chesterton, 2012, p. 82). Called the 'Duck Theory', supervisors require officers to dress like a duck, walk like a duck, talk like a duck, and interact with other ducks, and it is all too easy that you will become a duck (Schreiber, 2013). This is similar to the case of a former MI6 undercover agent who infiltrated Al-Qaeda, stating "…you will start to feel the effects, especially if you suppress that spy inside you basically, and you suppress your real emotions and your real feelings all the time and you pretend to be someone you aren't" (Channel 4 News, 2018). At the end of the assignment, the officer is simply expected to not act like a duck, and act like a police officer again:

"His role was to recondition me, to be conditioned to be a police officer. He wasn't there to sort everything out, he was there...I had to be trained to be a police officer again, it took me ages, to just go into work."

Yet, despite this, where previously UCO2 was likened to having undercover Stockholm syndrome, that is feeling sympathy for the target and overidentifying with the target, there was only one case of that attachment and sympathy on the behalf of UCO2:

"…that one lad I was buying drugs off, had a daughter, he told me all about his daughter and everything like that, and he was a nice lad to be honest, and I knew we were drug dealing but he was a nice pleasant lad who told me all about his kid. After the operation, one of the ops team

told me he hung himself in prison. That was hard to take really, and they didn't need to tell, me as if oh it's another one gone, but why would they need to tell me that...the fact that I've...he's probably making a bit of money for his kid, not that much money only a lower level being told to do it…"

This is what is described in the literature as seeing the human side to the criminals, that they can be likeable people and engaging (Miller, 2006), and it appears that provided the offender was not dealing drugs then it could have been that in another world they might have become friends. UCO2 feels that sympathy because he feels that the punishment, going to jail and him committing suicide is disproportionate for someone UCO2 sees as just trying to provide for his daughter, as well at the behest of another criminal further up the chain than he was. This reveals the consequences of that dual self-identity (Pogrebin & Poole, 1993), as the moral ambiguity of what UCO2 was doing transforms into emotional conflicts between performing their lawful duties and the concern felt for those he investigated. This then leads onto feelings of shame and guilt held by undercover officers. Whilst none formed those attachments with those they were investigating, 4 out of the 5 participants showed negative emotion and feelings of guilt and betrayal, not only to those who were principal targets, but also those who were on the peripheral of the drugs world. Guilt and shame were feelings reported by those undercover officers who had a more direct influence on their investigations, such as adopting a false persona and creating relationships, often with vulnerable people, in order to advance their investigation.

Those who did not feel that emotional attachment to those they were investigating, often did feel shame for manipulating vulnerable people in order to further their goals. An extract from UCO5 reflects this:

"…I knew that their lives were going to be made much worse as a result of meeting me because generally they were problematic heroin users and they're vulnerable people. I actually picked on vulnerable people because they're easier to manipulate."

And then powerfully describes this process:

"I suppose you could call what I did weaponising empathy because in order to be successful you had to understand the motivations of the people you were mingling with."

Although he feels this sympathy for other offenders, in that they used illegal drugs, he did not feel any sympathy or show any concern for those who were his targets, typically those who would prey on vulnerable drug users, which he came to see through periods of intense reflection which caused a lot of

the mental health problems he currently deals with:

> "There was a guy in Leicester called [redacted], and he was a brilliant bloke. He was a problematic heroin user…He just made me laugh, he was really, really, good company…and he was a very likable person, yeah, so I got quite attached to him."

Versus the lack of concern for his targets:

> "I don't remember getting attached to anyone I saw as a principle target."

Overall then, it appears that only one of the undercover officers formed an emotional attachment to a principle target, however this concern was shown after he found out that he committed suicide, so it is uncertain whether there were any feelings of sympathy prior to his knowledge of the death. Whilst over-identification and loss of identity can occur, only one participant reported such extreme feelings of identity loss, whereas others managed, due to various circumstances, to maintain the boundaries between their true identity and the real persona. Perhaps this is due to the length of time spent with their targets as suggested by Pogrebin and Pool (1993). The findings here differ from previous studies showing that intense emotional conflict where the undercover officer reaches a point where the investigation is prolonged in order to delay arrests (Pogrebin & Poole, 1993). Although, in conjunction with other studies (French, 2003), through working as an undercover officer, quite profound attitude shifts towards drug users occurred, in that they became more empathetic, this study observes similar perception changes towards drug users, especially vulnerable users. In this research, attitudes towards those who were targets of an investigation indicated more understanding of why someone deals drugs, or why the violence associated with the drug war will only increase. This is a similar finding to Pogrebin and Poole (1993, p. 389), who described some officers as feeling "morally tainted" by their undercover experiences Thus, they search for other explanations of criminal behaviour, other than personal choice and that all offenders are simply 'bad' people. Although the participants in this study did occasionally empathise with some targets, there was no indication of delaying any operations to prevent arrests or convictions. Perhaps this is due to short term investigations, although UCO5 recalls that a long-term operation would be 6 months or more, of which he conducted 7. The difficulty here is that no number can be placed at what point an officer would begin to overidentify with offenders, as this study is small in scale, and thus unrepresentative of all UCOs.

The implication of these findings is that separation and compartmentalisation of each identity is clearly adhered to all throughout the undercover investigations participated in. The police identity, dependent upon length of the operation, should be frequently re-established in order to prevent any instances of over-identification and de-personalisation. The needs of the officer should become priority, and to maintain a strict handler system which includes frequent contact should ensure that those needs are met and to make operational decisions whether or not to pull the officer from the case, should they feel the risk is too high. Some research has suggested to desist from offering counterproductive psychological support to maintain safety (Kowalczyk & Sharps, 2017), however, such advice to prevent reappearances outside of the operational context should include education on self-help strategies to increase the ability of the officer to separate their undercover life from their personal lives. Yet, prior to the operation, it is important that the undercover persona is based as closely on the officer as possible, rather than in the case of UCO2 whose undercover persona was inspired by a real person whom UCO2 held extremely negative feelings for.

Support Networks

Effects on the Family

Research has shown that the family can also suffer the consequences of undercover work, and this has led to domestic abuse, depression, anger and confusion as to where the loyalty of the undercover officer lies. Discussions around deceiving family members were quite prominent in the interviews, describing their job conflicting with their home and acting as a bubble of deception. Experiences differed in terms of how prominent the effects upon the family their undercover operations had. Problems such as finishing late and cancelling family plans also feature in the analysis. Overall, the effects on the family were generally quite negative, interspersed with positive experiences.

A female officer, UCO3, whose undercover work did not affect her personal life, states that she managed to keep the two very separate. She describes that her police work was her police work and her boyfriend (now husband) understood that. This was accepted, and he never asked her about her work and she never told him about her work. It was clear to both that for the relationship to work, the undercover work must always remain in that sphere, never to interfere with the relationship. There must

be clear boundaries between the two, and they must be understood by each other. She goes on to say:

> "I could put them into the boxes and then close it and leave it, that's my weekend job I'm back on shift now. I was lucky like that, I didn't take my work home with me."

UCO3 was unsure whether her ability to keep her private life separate from her undercover work was a positive or a negative thing, yet still recognises that she was lucky in her ability to separate and compartmentalise them:

> "I was quite lucky that I could do that because I knew other people who would take their work home with them and obsess about it. I could leave it there, that's Lucy that's not me and could switch off like that."

An intriguing point here is that the work should never be brought home, and thus clashes of the two are avoided. In order to do this, the problems at work should be attributed to the persona that she is playing at the time, in this case Lucy. Her shift work is therefore attributable to the persona of the police officer, and thus by extension, her marital problems, when present, would become attributed to the persona of the girlfriend/wife, which would not be brought into any other sphere in her life. This then allows an equilibrium between the three identified spheres allowing each to continue on their own path and to not clash together. This appears contrary to testimony by other undercover officers who suggest that the undercover role cannot be switched on and off outside of the work environment and that once they begin working undercover, they are always undercover, thus taking their work home with them (Pogrebin & Poole, 1993).

The concept of compartmentalisation was talked about by another officer, UCO1 (female). This officer describes how she attempted to compartmentalise her covert work and her home life, yet late finishes, and a perceived inability to talk to anybody else about her covert work make this difficult. In response to a question around whether she feels able to talk to family about her work, she states:

> "No, I think sometimes they would get a gist of if you didn't talk about it much, or you just said paperwork, they'd think probably best not to ask, and with the undercover work you tend to not want to talk about it in your private life."

and

> "…but sometimes you think, I didn't want to talk about it at home, because I thought…cos you try compartmentalise it all but then I suppose that can build up to stress and anxiety…"

UCO1 further describes the balance as a bubble, as she has to deceive people in her work, and she then has to deceive her family as to her activities at work:

> "…but with your private life, they ask what have you been doing at work this week, oh just paperwork and admin and that, so you feel a bit deceiving, but also you're doing quite a deceptive job, so it's just sometimes a bit of a bubble, I can't put it into words..."

This problems around deceiving the family are detailed in past research, and examples such as attending family and social gatherings, where people would ask the officer what they did for a living, and they would make up a story and lie to their friends and family (Pogrebin & Poole, 1993).

Marx (1988) argued that unpredictability of the work schedule, long hours away from home and concerns over safety are some of the main issues with undercover police officers and their families. This resonates with UCO4 upon whose marriage their covert work had a devastating effect. In response to a question asking whether there were any effects upon his private life he responded:

> "Yes, inevitable. Unsociable hours. It can take a toll on your marriage, in fact it did, it broke my first marriage up but that's another question, so yeah, certainly."

And he plainly states:

> "I'll reiterate about the antisocial hours. You could for example, arrange to go to a wedding and have to cancel it at the last minute…"

Therefore, not only is it the antisocial hours themselves, it is the added consequence that working unsociable hours, and even the uncertainty around whether you have to work past your shift due to the success of the operation, means you have to cancel already planned family events. The loss of this social support system means that there are little other avenues to explore in order to seek that support, due to the necessity of maintaining secrecy of the operation.

This then is problematic, as the family is a source of emotional, psychological and moral support that is necessary for conventional living (Pogrebin & Poole, 1993). If the undercover officer goes home, not wanting to discuss their work, due to both confidentiality and simply not wanting to discuss it in the first place, then as UCO1 has highlighted, this can be a source of stress and anxiety. This finding is in line with that of Farkas (1986) who observes that not being able to discuss their work leads to anxiety. If the

situation occurs where the family cannot be spoken to about their work, then another outlet should be made available for that officer to discuss and talking about how they feel. This is exceptionally difficult given the secrecy needed to maintain an undercover operation. The effects that it can have been detailed above and can even lead to the complete breakdown of a marriage.

In one account, two sides of the coin are presented. UCO5 describes how his undercover work was a means of escaping a relationship in which he was the receiver of domestic abuse and psychological manipulation, yet still managed to compartmentalise his life up until he suffered a breakdown:

> "But, I was in the rather peculiar situation, where I was actually going away to work undercover, and it was actually an escape from home life. So, I suppose I was in an unusual situation. It was an escape, that sort of personal development, being invested in something which...that dominated every waking thought. It was an escape."

This is balanced against his ability to compartmentalise his situation:

> "I still managed to switch off completely. I'd be taking my kids swimming on a Sunday morning. I would still enjoy myself, I would still relax. I didn't find it difficult to separate at all. I could compartmentalise that."

An account is given by UCO2, who describes the consequences of his undercover work on his home life, suggesting that compartmentalising the roles is more difficult than first thought, as undercover work can necessitate physical changes in the appearance of the officer. As described previously, the family can struggle to understand the changes that officer has made which is evidenced below:

> "…my wife said I looked like a rapist, she didn't...it were like, don't go anywhere near me cos I looked so filthy. I looked like a piece of shit, I was a piece of shit. Kids, I couldn't take them to parents' evening. They stopped me taking them to dancing and stuff 'cos of how bad I looked. They was embarrassed to have been with me, so I couldn't do anything really, 'cos I looked so bad."

To conclude, the main concerns appear to be uncertain shifts and inability to compartmentalise. The uncertainty of the operation itself will naturally negate the ability to just 'clock off', and a useful way to counter this is to offer the choice of control over when the officer thinks the operation should take place as much as possible, as demonstrated by UCO5, who was allowed to plan the operation around his own time, to negate lost time with the family, with astounding success for his operations. Further, a period of respite of a week was also provided which also helps to negate time lost from working in such patterns.

To account for the varied experience between the participants in the abilities of both UCO3 a UCO5 to compartmentalise, versus UCO2's inability to do the same, perhaps lies in UCO2's determined attempt to fully identify with the role he was playing. Finally, for instances where the office is unable to compartmentalise, this again can be managed through the use of a strict handler system, where concerns can be shared around the home life, and if necessary, to stop the operation should the effects become too great for the officer to cope with. The handler can protect the integrity of the 'police' identity and re-establish it if necessary. Operations should be limited in length and in quantity, as overt police work can be spoken about more freely than the undercover work can be. This should be assessed during and after each operation. This leads onto the next section, 'Support at Work'.

Support at Work

The sub-theme formal support at work emerged from discussions around support seeking at work, and the reasons why the undercover officers overwhelmingly did not choose to access that support. For one who did, he described how he felt uncared for and felt like just a number. Other ways of utilising support were from colleagues who were working with them, however, UCO's overwhelmingly tended to prefer working alone, either due to identity confusion or as a practical safety measure.

UCO3 highlights that to seek support at work, would be to appear as weak in asking for that support when needed, and makes the point that being a female in the man's world that is the police force amplified this, creating a situation that fosters stubbornness and independence to attempt to get on with it herself. UCO3 describes the stigma of suffering from poor mental health in the police force and was still seen as a taboo subject. When commenting on increasing time spent focusing on individuals suffering from mental health problems, she relates this back to herself:

> "What help am I getting then to, you're saying to process that, I don't think there is anything unless you go to HR and actively seek that, but again not many people will come out and say that because they don't want to admit they're depressed or admit they have mental instability or say that I'm dinking too much, because of that taboo about it. Stigma."

And she then assesses what provisions are actually made should someone need to seek that formal support:

> "…if there was some sort of counselling and debriefing or emotional support you know for your

thoughts and concerns as well, because you didn't want to say if something worried you, that sounds a bit dodgy, I'm not that comfortable doing it, because you didn't want to look stupid, you wanted to impress people and you sort of did what you were told."

UCO4 describes the scene from around 30 years ago and it is useful for comparing to the

perceptions of more recently active undercover police officers:

"It was frowned upon by senior staff, if you had time off sick because of stress. I mean a lot of guys did, and some girls did. I personally got the impression that where I worked, my senior officers they were rather bombastic, or it would get frowned upon if you decided you would have six months off sick because of that job or operation. So personally, I never went down that road, I never needed it. I coped quite well."

There is a stark difference in the language used to describe the atmosphere of support seeking,

and a willingness to do so. A better way to describe it may be officers now may feel more comfortable or

more able to discuss these problems outside the official world of policing, that is to researchers in this

case, or family and friends for those not in undercover work, as there still exists a perception that there

will be consequences that the officer will not be believed or it will adversely affect their career

progression. This is much in the same way as discussed in the literature review, which saw examples of

presenteeism in firearms departments being quite prevalent (Turner & Jenkins, 2018), as well as BME

officers feeling that they must work harder to match their white counterparts. UCO3 relates this same

problem of being a female in a male dominated profession.

An extract from UCO1 describes the lack of emphasis upon seeking support, to the point where

simply knowing about it is unlikely unless you were prompted by others to utilise it:

"…there is like, people in the police, professionals you could talk to like occupational health for mental health issues like anxieties, but you're not reminded of it often, so if you didn't ask for it or you weren't prompted with it, it would sometimes be easy to forget it was there."

Although, given UCO5's negative experiences when undercover, it is explained earlier that he

appeared to cope quite well, and it is suspected that the cause of this was the effects of the cover officer

looking after his needs had on his wellbeing. His experiences of the support system set up were often

positive and cites only one example where this system collapsed, thereby exposing him to a bullying

culture and a lack of professionalism on the behalf of those officers:

"…actually, the system of how undercover policing works for the cover officer, helps provide a buffer zone between the requirements of the investigation and the requirements of the

undercover police officer. It doesn't always work, it can fall down, it fell down for me in [town removed], where they didn't have the system set up correctly, but that was their lack of professionalism."

However, whilst he is positive about the cover officer system in place, the actual counselling sessions offered were quite low quality, yet does not place blame upon the system as he believes he lacked insight of the situation within his own mind at that time. UCO5 spoke to a doctor who advised that he may have been suffering from stress and then mentions this to his cover officer:

"So, I mentioned that to my cover officer when I went back and carried on working and he said, 'Oh we'll stop the job, that's it, you've got to see a counsellor to see how bad you are'. So, the next day I went to see the counsellor and their recommendation was just work fewer hours, so you can see the quality of the counselling."

And:

"…no, I'd say that buffer zone between the work and management is, it works"

Yet, as described earlier, the demands of the job meant that UCO5 could not work fewer hours, thereby rendering the support and guidance offered by the counsellor futile. When it is perceived that the case is progressing it is very difficult to just clock off and resume where you left off. As time went on, UCO5 describes how he would feel increasingly tired after each operation and describes himself as running on adrenaline at the time and likens it to a caffeine withdrawal. Yet despite these problems, UCO5 did not seek support and makes it clear that overall the cover officer system in place can work, as evidenced in the concern shown in this scenario. The ability of the cover officer to detect and manage the demands of the job and the wellbeing of the officer come at the cost of ending an investigation, should the former become unmanageable.

UCO2 had quite the opposite experience of those tasked with looking after his welfare, having suffered a breakdown, and receiving a diagnosis of PTSD he says:

"They can't put you on a scan and go there's [name removed], there's [name removed], you can't sort them out can you, it's all going on inside your head, but nobody else can see. People can say well you're just making it up, it's happened to me when I had that complete breakdown. A sergeant supposed to be looking after my welfare, said 'you know people will think you're swinging the lead', taking the piss. They can think what they want."

And:

"The police can't, to be fair the lot of them are mega busy, they've not got time to look after the welfare of their officers, but the police aren't the right people to help undercover officers who are suffering or any officer who are suffering mental health. I also don't think that occupational health within the police...because they're only working for the police, doing what the police want them to do."

The next extract depicts that depersonalisation could explain the aspects of dissociation from the police identity that UCO2 has went through:

"You're just a number, I went to occy health, first time I went, at the counter, I've been having a few problems, so I booked an appointment to come and see...some therapy. The woman behind the counter went 'number?', I went "what?" and she said 'what's your number? I need to look it up'. I said, 'do you not need my name?', and she said, 'no your number will do', which made me realize, I was a number."

For an officer having to be all of these difference identities, a more thorough exploration of which will take place in the risks to wellbeing section, being spoken to in a way which reduces someone to only one identity, the police identity, it is clear why such a negative perception of the support systems in place exist. That the same attitudes towards receiving mental health support as found elsewhere in the police stress literature exists here, may explain why other officers did not want to seek that support in the first place, as highlighted by UCO1 who often forgot about the existence of that support. UCO3, who felt that as a woman in a man's world felt like that would count against her, and UCO4 who explained the perception of the senior officers towards that support. Only UCO5 has a somewhat positive experience of that support, in the form of a cover officer. It follows then that the recommendation to be made here is that there should be a cover officer in every undercover investigation, who places the welfare of the officer ahead of the requirements of the investigation, should the UCO feel the same way. The problem then becomes the collapse of a case, which UCO1 was acutely worried about and stated so multiple times, resonating with (Renner et al., 2016). This could inhibit an officer from even admitting to dealing with such problems or opening up, for fear of blowing the case:

"…but you're still worried and panicking, like anxieties, about like what if my covers blown, but also that you're worried for your supervisors, thinking oh you don't want to mess this job up, you know like you don't want to blow the whole aim of what you're doing."

A possible answer to which is given by UCO2, in response to a question around changes in undercover policing:

"That's why I say try stop it now, cos how far can you go without actually becoming a druggie? Then will they help when they do go that far? From my experience not really. It shouldn't carry on. I would…if I stopped other people going into it, I wouldn't feel guilty that they're missing that opportunity, I've probably saved them from cocking their lives up or getting, ending up sectioned or whatever. It's irresponsible people putting people in that position I think."

Indeed this very same case has happened, whereby Robert Carrol became addicted to heroin after posing as a drug dealer, increasing his authenticity by carrying the drug in his mouth (The Telegraph, 2014). Judgements as yet cannot be made upon whether undercover policing as a tactic should continue unless quantitative data is gathered and analysed, calculating the number of undercover officers who suffer from mental health issues as a result of their work, or it is shown as unjustifiable in terms of ethical implications and the impact it has upon communities. However, with the release of guidelines governing the use of undercover policing (College of Policing, 2015), an assessment could be made that efforts to ensure higher standards are reached is the preferred route than to dismiss the tactic entirely.

Informal support from colleagues was inconsistent between the undercover officers interviewed here, two officers stated working with others was a benefit to their wellbeing due to being able to discuss strategies, and as a mechanism for bonding with others. One UCO could see the positives, but this was balanced against a need to keep focused on your own undercover story, rather than worry about another. However, one UCO was critical of scenarios where you work with another undercover officer, owing to the fact that it adds and increases dissociation adding more undercover identities into the mix.

UCO1 describes how working with others facilitates both problem oriented coping strategies, as well as emotional coping strategies. Problem oriented in that discussing and conducting informal debriefs was a way to plan future operations, offering and sharing suggestions for dealing with a certain situation. When sharing tactics not only provides practical advice in order to safely conduct their work, or to themselves perceive they will do a better job, this also allays the anxiety and loneliness around conducting covert investigations. This then becomes emotionally focused coping due to the provision of tactics also as a calming measure, as well as to facilitate that camaraderie that might be necessary in the future:

"Yeah definitely, I think that working with the people that are in the same boat as you, you discuss things and strategies, and how they handled certain situations. Just like when you're debriefing

and that you don't feel as if you're on your own, you're all in it together."

This is a similar principle to students seeking support during exam periods which facilitated both problem-focused, and emotion-focused strategies in that sharing of tips and techniques provides practical exam advice, and through the secondary effect of calming ones nerves (Mechanic, 1962). UCO3 further states that having another UCO colleague present to provide backup should a situation go awry, allows for effective relationship building with colleagues, as form a bond and attachment, through learning their cover story:

"…so I had to learn a certain amount of your background story, because we're going in and we're supposed to be mates, or students, going out to [town removed] for a change I need to know something about you, and you get close to people like that when you're working in those stressful environments, risking your life…"

Here it is shown that working with another UCO allows you to become closer to colleagues, which provides another effect of sharing information necessary to the safe execution of an undercover operation, as if this fails, then both are placed in extreme danger, as described previously. If you are going into a situation where you are supposed to be friends for the cover story, then to echo the concerns of Miller (2006), the closer the identity and the persona is to the undercover officer's real identity and persona, the more successful the operation is likely to be. Therefore, getting to know and understanding the undercover identity of colleagues will undoubtedly make your own undercover persona more authentic. This also aids bonding and could decrease isolation if there is another officer able to discuss the case, as this does not jeopardise the secrecy of the operation.

On the other side, an account of the benefits and negatives is given by UCO5. He explains that working on one's own makes it easier to concentrate on your own persona and your own back story, rather than to worry about another UCO knowing yours and their own backstory too. Whereas if you have another UCO with you, failing to remember their backstory or vice versa could severely increase the risk of violence and danger:

"Most of the time I prefer to work on my own, and the reason for that it's easiest because you don't have to think about anyone else's reactions and your sort of a centred, single functioning unit that thinks quickly, and you can think quicker because you don't have to second guess anything."

This is possibly related to when UCO5 learned two cover stories, one given by the police, and the other given by a drug user who was introducing UCO5 to high-level dealers. They were cross-examined, whilst facing brutal attacks by multiple unknown attackers, which is an amazing feat of human memory to remember two false stories whilst suffering violence, worried that you will not live through the trial. He does however recognise the positives:

> "Having said that, it can be rewarding if the other person is talented, and I have worked with some really good people over time. It's getting to know and learn from them. For the most part I was happier on my own."

The preference will lie in the simplicity and ease of memorising only one backstory, and further supports UCO3 when it facilitates team-building and making that relationship between each other is a way of making that relationship more authentic, and one less thing to manufacture on the spot.

UCO2 is scathing of working with others. This again is related to those identity issues that UCO2 deals with and impedes his ability to understand his own identity:

> "…it doesn't help working with other undercovers cos they're all screwed up to be honest, they have all got things going on, they've all got their identities going on and you don't know what's going on inside their head, do you? It's bad enough trying to work out what's going on in your own, you try think of loads of undercovers together how would that be?"

This is vividly described further:

> "Who are you talking to? Know what I mean? Talk to another undercover cop, but who're you talking to? Their alter ego, or their identity as a cop? Or some identity they had before that? You don't know who you're talking to. I could be talking to you, and there could be 7 of us talking to each other."

The way UCO2 describes their experience is a more in-depth, and graphic account of the negatives stated by UCO5, in that whilst working with others can be a positive team-building exercise, UCO2 firmly believes that it is not the police identity you are getting to know and that it is impossible to know which "identity" one is actually dealing with. This again is similar to descriptions of identity confusion (Girodo et al., 2002), as UCO2's own confusion and dissociation, encompassing the identities of other undercover officers. However, this extract cannot tell us whether his colleagues suffer from that same confusion around their own identity, or whether they could manage to separate them and distinguish between the other.

Whilst receiving support at work, either formally or informally was a common theme interpreted from the data, the difference between the two conceptually resulted in mixed and inconsistent findings. Whereas for formal support, this was overwhelmingly negative. This was due to stigma of suffering mental health, and preservation of a strong female identity; perceived ability to cope at the time; or a lack of knowledge around support availability; and further a complete condemnation of the process as unsuitable, inefficient and uncaring towards officers. This reflects a necessary culture change in how support is administered, necessitating formal rules and guidance on steps that should be taken to maintain staff well-being. Informal support however, leaned more towards a positive angle and remained generally consistent with only one officer completely disregarding that informal support. Consistent in that former officers recognised the benefits of team-building and as a protective safety factor, whilst one deviation was due to problems in identity recognition, separation and distinction. One could suggest that in that specific case, better selection techniques should have prevented an officer with PTSD from engaging in such psychologically risky work. A further study conducted with managers, trainers and handlers could better advise on such selection processes, in the face of new CoP guidelines (2015).

Coping

This theme deals with the main strategies of coping as identified throughout the interviews. Through conducting the analysis various patterns were interpreted, surrounding issues such as reflection, alcohol, and physical activity. This theme is ordered after dangers and risks, as they needed to be discussed prior to an analysis of the corresponding coping strategies in order to aid understanding.

Reflection

Questions around reflection and its utility were included in the interview schedule, and participants detailed the various ways they reflected, what they discovered through their periods of reflection, and how positive it was for them as a coping strategy and whether it helped to deal with the stresses described above. Some reflect upon the manipulation they conducted in order to further their case, whereas others focus upon their actions and what they did, what they could have done better. Whilst this was useful for some, it could lead to rumination and brooding, which then leads to negative thoughts.

UCO4 states that the reflection process for him was the assessment of his own actions and his own efficacy in handling an undercover case. This leads to concern over whether he should have or should not have pursued a course of action. This process starts from assessing one's actions and the consequences of constantly worrying about whether what he did was right or not:

"Did we do it well, did we cock it up? I've had many sleepless nights assessing what I could have done, what I shouldn't and should have done so yeah, it depends on which job it was."

UCO1 states that she utilises reflection in a similar way:

"Yeah definitely, I suppose as well, the pros and cons of how I worked in that role and what skills could be transferred to roles of similar nature…"

And:

"…but when you reflect back at home you think, 'god I put myself'...you know, 'why did I do that I shouldn't have done that' and 'I could have put myself at risk'

Further stating:

"…so, you're constantly reflecting or if somethings particularly stressed you out that time you think well, I won't let that happen again, but it does come with its uncertainties, so although you do reflect, the next time it could be totally different so it's managing the uncertainty on that."

Then the process from reflection to rumination can be seen progressing, as the UCO begins focusing upon the risks, how to manage those and what potentially could be done differently next time. Then the rumination begins, as the focus moves onto how she felt about these situations, which can show how quickly one can go from positively reflecting and assessing one's actions, to worrying about the implications of the situations themselves. This is an example of the model proposed by Stein and Grant (2014), whereby what starts off as reflection moving onto self-insight, becomes impeded by negative attitudes thus disallowing the UCO to move onto the stage after self-insight which is positive self-attitudes and then increased subjective wellbeing. The focus becomes not on dealing with similar situations in the future, but instead on the risky situations she was placed into and how she would have coped with a situation gone sour. The situation didn't go sour, but the thoughts and feelings then became focused on a non-existent, although possible, situation which then increased levels of anxiety and worry:

"I think that's the main thing reflecting on, what potential risks, if a situation we were watching had

turned sour, or things had changed and it was risky and you think oh, would I have been able to cope had that have happened, how would I have reacted and would it have put me off going back in the next day, not that you have a choice, but you think you worry and panic that I want taken off this it's too much."

This is described here also:

"Yeah, when you do sit and reflect things like that, you think of the risks, that can get your stress levels and anxiety back up and things, like you say, make you a bit nervous, thinking how naive was I to think…to think that maybe couldn't happen, so it would all start, your emotions again."

However, then juxtaposed against UCO1s final position on reflection in general:

"On the whole I think it is a positive thing, in any job really, it's good to reflect…"

The positivity around the reflection shown at the end seems quite counter to the extracts provided above, explicitly stating that reflection is good, which is what was described in the first three passages. Then when the reflection on her feelings occurs, and the uncertainty, this leads to ruminating on the risks she was placed under and her worry and anxiety should she be faced with another risky situations. This is because of an inability to account for uncertain elements inherent in an undercover investigation, which leads to that worry and anxiety even after the situation has happened, because that situation cannot be used to inform how she could act in a future risky situation.

UCO2 describes reflection as largely a negative experience, not wanting to even think about their past and it is impossible to get away from it:

"Yeah, you live them it's the story isn't it, it's the story you've created inside your head and you do live them it's like any other story. Like the story I used to be a footballer or whatever. It's always there, you will live it. Reading a book, you'll sometimes go back in your head about that book or watching a programme on tv. But this is a real thing what's happened to you, so you go over and over. You can't get away from it"

And:

"So, if I do start going back into it, I don't want to listen to it."

Reflection in this case, for UCO2, is to figure out who they actually are as a person and what their identity is and how this relates to them as part of their story. To keep reflecting is to keep one's mind in that moment and to cause that confusion around one's identity. This reflection process, although

negatively experienced by UCO2, is intended to discard identities that at present have no purpose. This next extract captures this:

> "Who am I? Who am I? I'm not that…I wasn't that person buying drugs or whatever, so keep yourself inquiring, whatever will be will be, let it come naturally."

UCO3 however, reflects on those she has investigated and who have been caught up in the criminal justice system and wonders about their life chances:

> "Yes, I'd say more so now than back then. I do wonder what they're doing now, what are their chances you know. A prison sentence totally minimises your life chances. Yeah."

And:

> "Not much choice to be honest. Out of prison what are they going to do? Yeah, a bit depressing really, because it's few and far between the ones that can turn their lives around and make it better because it's all stacked together. Once you're in that world it's hard to get out."

This reflective process is case-oriented reflection and analysing her role in gathering evidence as an undercover police officer. This leads to negative feelings indicating guilt for having played that part in reducing someone's life chances, even though she recognises that whilst they might have been committing crime, she does feel hopeful that the offenders can turn over a new leaf:

> "Now, I feel for them because they're human beings and they were set up and took the fall, so I don't really feel very good about that. I wonder, what they're doing now, which is probably in and out of prison, not always, but it's not going to be that they've got the Nobel Peace Prize or anything like that."

This is where UCO3 starts to reflect upon her actions and the part she played, and the negative feelings associated with that role:

> "You have to develop these relationships to win their trust, so...it's really quite hard to think, that you've been doing this club, getting this rapport with a couple of guys, you have a laugh with them, they trust you and basically you just fuck them over because one week you don't turn up and that's when the swoop will happen and all the police officers will come into the club and you're not there, and they're like betrayed really and it's not nice you know, it's not nice."

UCO5 reflects in a similar way, primarily on those he has manipulated which causes feelings of shame and guilt. This process is described as a journey as he relates this guilt not only to those who he feels he has manipulated, but links this to the greater picture of the drugs war:

"Yeah, I reflected on them, I always reflected upon the people I had manipulated and certainly reflected on that a great deal..."

And:

"So, at the time, I knew I was increasing the risk to them, but at the time I was making ethical decisions, but I did wrestle with this as an issue and I did come to the decision to do this at the time, that the end justified the means because at the end of the operation I would be making the community safer by getting rid of the gangsters."

This then led to a 'penny drop' moment:

"Eventually when the penny dropped for me and realised that the reason organised crime was getting more and more violent each passing year was actually down to me, not just me, but people like me and of course I was involved in the training and development of the tactic."

What follows on from this realisation is that the symptoms of PTSD are as a direct consequence of the manipulation he carried out, thus signalling the finish line of his journey of reflection and the feelings and thoughts associated with his actions are traced to these specific scenarios. From using his own experiences from his participation in the drug war, his perspective has changed from a problematic view of heroin users which sees them as at fault for getting themselves into that situation, to one where he realises that they are very vulnerable people. This view was not shared by his colleagues:

"I sort of found myself at odds with my colleagues, but in sympathy with those I was manipulating. I think that's sort of part of the journey which has led to the state I'm in."

Another salient feature in the reflection process is possibly the means by which someone reflects. UCO1, when prompted with examples of coping strategies, mentions how writing up notes on a case can help to frame the work she does. This could be because the notes are written in such a way as to document the actual occurrences, keeping the UCO focused on what actually happened rather than discussing the risks faced by the individual which in this case then leads to the anxiety and worry of facing that situation again. What actually happened in this scenario is that there was no violence perpetrated against the UCO, through reading through the case notes there appears to be constant reassurance that although risks were faced, they did not come to fruition. The UCO can sit back and perform this self-debrief, in a more objective way, by sticking to the 'facts' rather than the possible outcomes:

"I suppose from the point of view that writing obviously any work you do has to be documented and things and now you mentioned that for me writing things up to analyse and do evaluations I think it does put it in some like, give it some chronology to think oh, and sit back and do a little debrief yourself and to reflect upon it and I think that did help me, the writing up of the notes of what's gone on an passing them on so that was kind of a stress reliever, as part of a coping mechanism."

A possible coping strategy for UCO's, due to constraints surrounding discussion of their work, could be instruction and training for those becoming undercover officers in self-help coping strategies. Specifically, writing in diaries or writing notes purely for their own use in order to conduct self-debrief sessions by reviewing the notes and then focusing on the 'here and now', rather than reflecting into the past on situations that can cause feelings of worry, anxiety, guilt, and shame. This is in the same spirit of mindfulness-based interventions, in that avoiding a judgemental stance on past experiences can reduce traumatic stress symptoms. The above recommendation is in agreement with past research that advocates greater education on easy to use and health coping mechanisms, in order to reduce rates of depersonalisation and burnout (Kowalczyk & Sharps, 2017).

Overall, the process of reflection for the participants tends to lead to negative thoughts and feelings, because they believe that they are primarily the centre of the harm caused. The reflection is about the harm caused to others, and on their cases, and worrying whether or not they performed the right actions. Consistency with previous literature is difficult to gauge as reflection has not been measured or associated with any qualitative or quantitative research before. Support from psychologists again should include education on reflection, so that when support is difficult to administer such as at home, the officer can utilise reflection positively to prevent the occurrence of negative attitudes impeding positive wellbeing.

Alcohol

In terms of coping through the use of alcohol, findings were mixed and do not reflect previous literature in terms of severity or prevalence, granted this is a small sample of 5 former officers. One out of the 5 utilised alcohol to unwind, One regarded alcohol as the first response to an increase in anxiety, whereas 2 alluded to a social form of drinking alcohol with one of those hinting at a problematic background of substance misuse. The final UCO did not at all use any form of psychoactive substance.

Firstly, two former UCO's, 3 and 4, describe their drinking habits as part of socialising. UCO4

describes the tradition of socialising through alcohol. This is commonly found amongst police officers (Powell et al., 2014), that utilise alcohol to serve social bonding functions, rather than the use of alcohol as a coping mechanism in its own right:

> "…we used to socialise with each other through drink. It was a salient part of CID, a form of relaxation."

And UCO3's experience is similar to this:

> "…what you'd do is after a job you'd go somewhere and have a few drinks and get pissed. That was our destressing…"

However, the tone changed, indicating a heavier dependence on alcohol as a specific, go-to strategy when there was no other option:

> "…life was the problem and I couldn't handle life, and that's why I drank and used drugs. It's like medicate the pain, self-medicating to stop the thoughts…"

This response concurs with self-medication theories (Tiet & Mausbach, 2007), that propose people with higher levels of anxiety and anxiety sensitivity are prone to problematic alcohol use, and that drinking is a prime mechanism for coping by those who do not seek help. This is reflected also by UCO5:

> "Oh, this is a problem, I unwind by drinking alcohol. Which is a problem because it has become a response...a first response feeling that I'm feeling anxious and it's a problem. Certainly in 2011/2012, I was drinking huge amounts. I've always drank alcohol, but it's a police culture thing and I've always liked it a lot."

However, this is balanced against the insight held by UCO5 who is aware of the further damage which can be caused by excessive alcohol use. The insight shown here is indicative of a strong awareness of the links between alcohol as an anxiolytic as well as the trigger for a desire for alcohol:

> "I am aware that alcohol can make PTSD symptoms worse and make it harder to actually deal with it as well, I'm aware of the physiological and psychological link between the two."

Previous literature often cites alcohol abuse by undercover officers (Farkas, 1986; Girodo, 1991b; Love et al., 2008; Pogrebin & Poole, 1993), however in most studies no explanation for this is given other than narcissism and high impulsivity. Love et al. (2008) and Farkas (1986) report only on the prevalence amongst former and current undercover officers, whilst Pogrebin and Poole (1993) allude to alcohol

abuse stemming from temptation which is endemic in undercover policing.

Whilst the UCO's in this study use alcohol, this might be more due to the social aspect of a police culture which copes by drinking, as well as a psychodynamic model of substance abuse (Darke, 2013), rather than being vulnerable to the temptations prevalent within the undercover environment. Primarily, it is argued that alcohol serves a specific bonding function for undercover police officers and is recognised as such that whilst it can be harmful, it is an accepted practice within the police culture, as a way of celebration of the conclusion of a difficult case. Secondly, this research suggests that in some instances, alcohol is a specific go-to coping mechanism to deal with feelings of anxiety, and distressing symptoms, however this was not reported by all UCO's in this study. This is evidence for self-medication through alcohol amongst undercover police officers. Further enquiry in this area should be made to establish prevalence in a UK sample of undercover police officers.

Physical Activity

The final sub-theme that was discussed in the interviews was the utility of physical exercise that enabled positive coping to take place, however interestingly, two UCO's in this study perceived physical activity as negative in different ways. One UCO did not utilise physical activity. Whereas for another, when they exercise there is a profound impact on their wellbeing. One UCO recognised the importance of exercise, however struggles to summon the motivation necessary.

UCO5 discussed a previous dedication to fell running to the point of competing in marathons at the time he was active as an undercover officer, however, since the appearance of various symptoms, he describes it as difficult to get back into that hobby:

"I tried to get back into running but I find it hard, well I do feel better if I can run a couple of times a week."

And compared to now, light exercise offers some benefits in increasing wellbeing:

"Sometimes I'll cycle to the supermarket and back, and then I'll do some weights and that can help me feel chilled out. It's not huge, but it's a little benefit."

This is in concurrence with UCO4, who engaged in various sporting activities:

"I played a lot of sport like squash, badminton and I used to play football as well. Obviously as

you can see it was 30 years ago, I was a lot fitter back then, so that was another release."

For UCO3, the benefits are more pronounced, and she is explicit in her perception that running acts as a way to run the negative thoughts out:

"Yeah, it was important to sort of like run it out. I still do that now, as a way to, keep things going. I can, I can just get into that state where I'm pounding the streets and not thinking about anything."
And:

"Today, I do…I do mindfulness, meditation, yoga, and I do exercise."

UCO3 found that she exercised more whilst undercover as she endured more stress, thus increasing her focus on running as a coping mechanism to deal with negative thoughts and attitudes. The utility that running provides acts as a distraction technique, when increases in negative emotions are felt, specifically stress, in order to reduce those feelings, however this could be done to the excess at times.

Interestingly, UCO2 provides us with an account of exercise as a distraction technique, and as well as a novel mechanism by which exercise increased his ability to be successful in his undercover work, that is, through excessive exercise in order to facilitate the aforementioned appearance manipulation he describes. One of the ways in which UCO2 utilised exercise was in a similar way to UCO3, in that it acted as a distraction technique:

"But I get in a routine, train, like [inaudible] spin on the bike. I'm addicted to that, it's my new addiction. When I go there, and I can feel it, like releases a lot of things and that can come out as a still bag of water. Exercise is a big thing."

Similarly, to UCO5, UCO2 also utilised fell running at the time, however this was in preparation for getting into the undercover role, making himself dirty to make his undercover persona more believable thus serving a dual function:

"…I was doing fell running, so before work, see people getting into character before they went on stage and stuff, I'd run up and down this hill, do press ups get filthy and drive where I was going…"
As well as to reduce the distressing thoughts and to calm anxiety, worry and tension that was felt due to taking on an undercover identity, worrying about what he will do, what he will say, and how to keep himself safe. This allowed him to focus on the operation, thus dealing with emotions primarily, so as to enable clear focus on problem solving strategies. This is reflective of previous studies that have linked

exercise to reduced levels of anxiety and depression (Mandolesi et al., 2018; Sonstroem & Morgan, 1989; Wipfli, Landers, Nagoshi, & Ringenbach, 2011):

> "…but the running helped to calm my brain. It was always thud, thud, thud, thud, all the time…"

UCO2 also employs Yoga as a coping strategy as a way of calming the mind and reducing distressing thoughts. A further comment made after the interview stresses the importance of the yoga in his recovery. However, he describes his apprehension starting it, being concerned that yoga is not an activity for males to engage in:

> "It's really relaxing, and I thought no not for me, but I tried it and it's really good I enjoyed it, it kind of stills your mind a little bit…"

Whilst there is little discussion around physical exercise and the effect on wellbeing for undercover police officers, as well as former undercover police officers, the effects in the general population are well discussed (Mandolesi et al., 2018; Sonstroem & Morgan, 1989; Wipfli et al., 2011). The utility of physical exercise generally is consistent with previous literature, as ways to reduce symptoms and improve wellbeing, however excessive exercise serves a dual purpose of bolstering the undercover identity by making oneself look worked out, filthy, and dishevelled, in order to allay suspicions of their true undercover identity. This, however, is very specific to one of the former UCO's interviewed, and it is not expected to be a prevalent tactic used by undercover officers, as this was a very specific case with quite novel circumstances. Further research with a larger number of current and former undercover officers would be useful in order to assess this further, however here it is preliminarily found to be extremely positive and should feature in the advice offered through support networks and perhaps offered through sessions held by instructors.

Conclusion

In conclusion, two specific research questions have been addressed: what the stressors are facing former undercover police officers, and secondly; what coping strategies they use to reduce the effects of those stressors. Three themes were identified and interpreted: Risks to Wellbeing; Support Networks and; Coping. The analysis of the data demonstrates that the stressors faced by undercover

officers can vary and can affect them in different ways. The most universal stressor amongst the participants is their safety, which then affected their wellbeing. Each one identified a case whereby they felt they were at risk, or in danger of being harmed, and others identified specific cases where they were physically harmed in violent assaults, and in one case even as far as almost being killed after being chased by drug dealers in a car. In one case however, this fear for their safety was related to being harmed by police themselves, having been assaulted during a case by a group of police officers unaware of their victim's true identity. The findings are consistent with previous literature, citing the fear of discovery, linked with the fear of danger as the most prominent stressor. The analysis of this theme raises questions around fear of danger versus the actual risk of danger and how the two may interact, or how the former is felt and specifically why some officers appear to cope with actual danger better than those who only fear it. The ability to measure this further was limited by the small sample of participants, and the lack of *current* undercover officers who can offer other insights as they currently experience UC work, as well as to offer a solution to difficulties in recall. Frequently mentioned was the issue of support at work, often lacking, or downright unsupportive of the former undercover officers, a factor which greatly impedes positive wellbeing. Overall, support received at work was mainly due to supervisors' ignorance of the problems faced by undercover officers such as high expectations for uncertain scenarios and being oblivious to the dangers present. Significant questions were also raised around the issue of being a female and having to operate in a 'man's world', which warrants further academic inquiry, as it is believed that in this case it placed one former UCO at great risk of danger.

Stressors such as the effect on the family, and identity stressors were quite varied, the former more than the latter as the effects on the family appeared to stem more from patterns of work, such as unsociable hours and long shifts rather than the officer taking on the role of an undercover officer as this could affect those officers involved in the investigation who are on the periphery and not directly interacting with offenders. Only in one case was this directly related to their undercover work, where such profound physical changes in the appearance greatly affected the UCO's wellbeing due to the effect upon the family. Identity stressors was not a prevalent stressor amongst the participants, in that whilst for one this deeply affected their wellbeing, for others they recognised the changes and the effects of taking on an undercover persona was mitigated by the ability to compartmentalise and separate this from their

personal life. This raises questions around length of service, type of investigation, length of investigation, and number of identities taken on. This supports literature that refutes identity stressors as a common stressor, however, due to its qualitative nature it is only tentative support, and further inquiry with a British sample is necessary to solidify findings.

In regards 'Coping', the main findings appear to be that each former UCO in the study copes in various ways dependent upon the stressor. Reflection was however used negatively by every former UCO, and they often delve into the realms of rumination, and becoming adversely affected by negative attitude which thus inhibits positive wellbeing. Reflection upon the dangers and risks faced was a prominent issue, which again raises the question around fear of danger as opposed to the actual risk itself causing negative attitudes. Alcohol was also frequently mentioned as a coping strategy however it was utilised in varying ways. It was found here that for some it was used to further enhance social bonding as opposed to the alcohol itself, however for others there was a clear intention to self-medicate with substances. This finding speaks to the issue of available support for officers, which negates the need to self-medication with any psychoactive substance. Again, here are raised significant questions around the use of alcohol for undercover officers as a specific go to coping mechanism, and how this differentiates or is indeed supported by the use of alcohol in a social capacity. Finally, the analysis deems physical activity as the most useful and beneficial coping strategy used, as each participant either recognised the benefit of exercise, whereas others identify this as a specific coping strategy, such as yoga which was greatly featured in the analysis. Implications of this include how exercise affects post-operation reintegration and could potentially lead to use of led sessions to increase wellbeing through physical activity.

The direction of research henceforth should focus on the following areas, each with their own considerations: quantitative analysis of stressors and wellbeing of undercover police officers, requiring access to this population, is a priority in this area I argue, as knowledge of the types of investigation, numbers of undercover police officers and an overall picture needs to be drawn of this population; qualitative analysis of wellbeing amongst current undercover police officers, perhaps drawing comparisons to the data reported here; further insights should be drawn of the 'length of service debate' across undercover police officers. Further, advice to prospective researchers should heed to the current

climate of undercover policing, and to anticipate change which may affect access to this population, such as willingness to be involved in research. On a final note, researchers should expect to encounter barriers whilst the Undercover Police Inquiry is ongoing, and perhaps a prudent time to conduct the above recommended research would be once it has concluded, granting greater access to participants able to discuss such sensitive matters.

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Appendices

Appendix One – Interview Schedule

1. Context
    a. What grade were you? (UCF or UCA) (One or 2)
    b. How many UC Operations did you participate in?
    c. How long since you last engaged in an UC Op?
2. Stressors
    a. Please could you describe a memorable case? I.e. one that comes to mind?
        i. Did you feel this affected you? In what ways? If no, why not?
        ii. Do you think this still affects you?
    b. What do you see personally as the negative aspects of an undercover investigation?
        i. Do you feel that undercover work is stressful? More so than aspects of routine police work?
            1. Could you elaborate on specific elements with examples?
        ii. Is there more pressure from senior officers during your undercover role do you think? If so, please describe what this feels and looks like?
        iii. Did you ever worry for your safety during an undercover operation? If so, how did you manage this?
    c. What personally do you see as the positive aspects of working as an undercover investigator? Any examples?
    d. Does working with other UC officer(s) help you deal with working an undercover investigation?
    e. How did it feel engaging with those you were investigating?
        i. Did you ever feel a sense of conflict between your job and those you were investigating? If so, could you describe how this felt
        ii. Did you become emotionally attached to those you've investigated?
        iii. If so why? If not, why not?
        iv. Are there any effects on your private life when working undercover?
            1. In your opinion what is the cause of these difficulties?
            2. Did you find it difficult to separate your private life from your undercover work?
3. Coping Strategies
    a. How do you normally unwind?
        i. Do you feel that you can talk to people? (To family, other officers, medical professional?)
        ii. Do you exercise regularly? Does it help to relieve any stress? Did you exercise more or less when you worked undercover?

b. Did/do you employ any coping strategies?
    i. If so, what?
c. Is there anything you wish you had known when you began undercover work that you know now?
    i. What would you advise an officer thinking of becoming an UCO? Pros and cons?
    ii. Has this work had any negative impact on your professional or personal life?
        1. How did this impact your professional and personal life?
d. How would/did you seek support during an investigation?
    i. What about after an investigation?
e. Do/did you reflect upon cases once it has ended?
    i. How did you feel after you reflected?
f. Do you think that undercover work has changed in recent years and if so how?

Appendix Two – Information Sheet

University of
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Exploring the Emotional and Psychological Wellbeing in Former Undercover Police Officers.

INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to take part in a study about **Exploring the Emotional and Psychological Wellbeing of Former Undercover Police Officers.** Before you decide to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it me if you wish. Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the study about?
The purpose of this study is 'Exploring the Emotional and Psychological Wellbeing of Former Undercover Police Officers.'

Why I have been approached?
You have been asked to participate because you could provide information around your wellbeing during and after an undercover operation has been conducted. You may have had previous experience in undercover work and can offer information relating to your emotional and psychological wellbeing after an undercover operation.

Do I have to take part?
It is your decision if you take part. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form, and you will be free to withdraw at any time until **two weeks** after the interview and then **two weeks** after you have been given a copy of your transcript, for you to request deletions/amendments. You will be provided a final draft for you to assess whether your experiences have been fairly represented, again, you will have **two weeks** to decide this. No response will be taken as consent to proceed. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect your employment as this research is conducted as part of a Masters thesis, under the guidance of the University of Huddersfield.

What will I need to do?
If you agree to take part in the research you will be asked to participate in a face to face interview with myself (Liam Curran), which will be **recorded** on an encrypted recording device, to allow me to transcribe the interviews afterwards. I will ask questions around your experiences of being an undercover operative and your feelings around your experiences. The interviews may last between 30-60 minutes depending on your answers, as a rough guide. The interviews will take part at a time/location convenient for you, aiming for completion in around March/April.

Will my identity be disclosed?
All information disclosed within the interview will be kept confidential, unless you indicate that you or anyone else is at risk of serious harm, in which case I would need to pass this information to my supervisor who will advise on the appropriate action. Your name, former constabulary, or location will **NOT** be disclosed, and only a general region will be indicated (North West eg.). I will refer to you as "FO '1...2...3' etc. Operational tactics are **not** the focus of the study, and you will be provided with a transcript in order for you to remove information

Version 3: dated 6/02/2018

you'd like to withdraw, and will also be provided a list of quotes expected to be used in the analysis and final piece. You will then have **TWO WEEKS** from this date to request amendments/deletions.

What will happen to the information?
All information collected from you during this research will be kept secure and any identifying material, such as names will be removed in order to ensure anonymity. It is anticipated that the research may, at some point, be published in a journal or report. However, should this happen, your anonymity will be ensured, although it may be necessary to use your words in the presentation of the findings and your permission for this is included in the consent form. The data will be stored for a period of 10 years. This is to ensure academic integrity.

Who can I contact for further information?
If you require any further information about the research, please contact me on:

Name: Liam Curran
E-mail: u1454268@pgr.hud.ac.uk
Telephone: 07715432666

Appendix Three – Consent Form

University of
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CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: Exploring the Emotional and Psychological Wellbeing in Former Undercover Police Officers.

It is important that you read, understand and sign the consent form. Your contribution to this research is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged in any way to participate, if you require any further details please contact your researcher.

I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research as outlined in the ☐
information sheet version 3, dated 6/2/2018.

I consent to taking part in it ☐

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time up to a period of two

weeks after the transcript is provided ☐

I give permission for my words to be quoted (by use of pseudonym) ☐

I understand that the information collected will be kept in secure conditions for a period of ten

years ☐
I understand that no person other than the researcher will have access to the raw data provided.

In cases of Safeguarding I will seek advice from my supervisor ☐

I understand that my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym in the ☐
report and that no written information that could lead to my being identified will
be included in any publication.
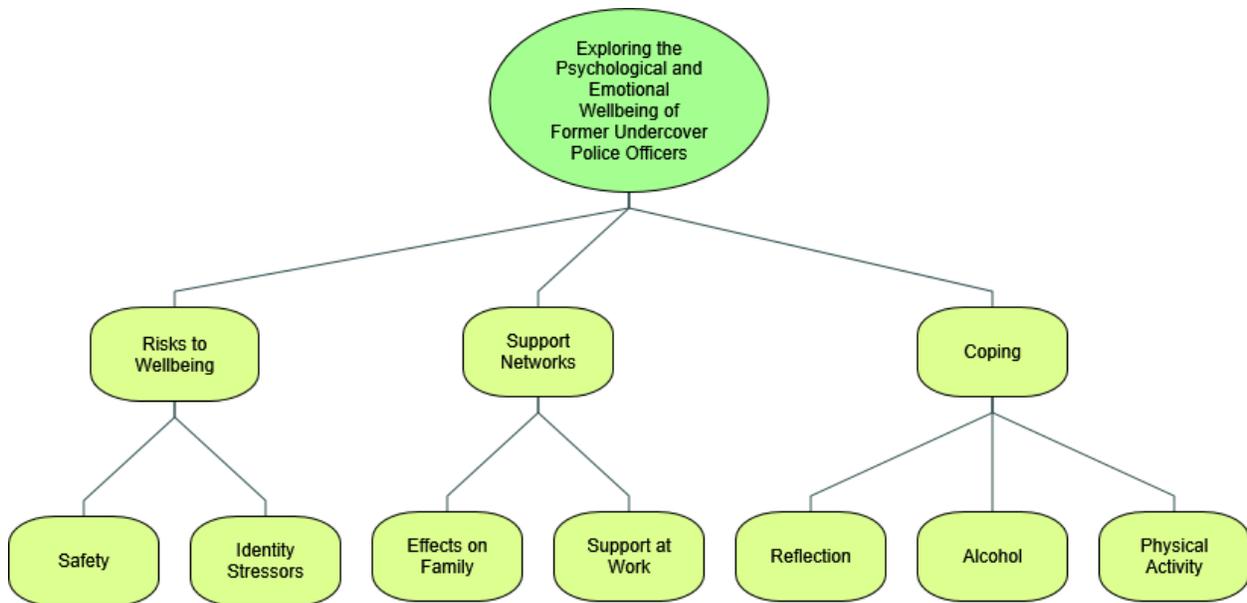
If you are satisfied that you understand the information and are happy to take part in this project
please put a tick in the box aligned to each sentence and print and sign below.

Signature of Participant:	Signature of Researcher:
_____	_____
Print:	Print:
_____	_____
Date:	Date:
_____	_____

Appendix Four- Initial Theme Map

Appendix Five – Final Theme Map

LC: When you were an undercover officer what grade were you? Advanced/Foundation or Level one or Level two?

UCO5: Well I started working undercover before they had the distinction between level one and level two, then I became a level two. That's the only way I was ever measured at the time. Then the foundation and advanced system came in before I actually finished working undercover, but there was a series of modules you could do. It wasn't just advanced and foundation, you had different levels of foundation, so you were qualified to do different types of work because had been doing lots of different types of work to start with. I was sort of considered qualified to do all those things as well because I actually trained on course, in fact I trained on course after I finished course as an undercover. Essentially by today's measure I'm either foundation or level two.

LC: How many undercover operations did you participate in?

UCO5: Oh, I don't know. Long term which I recall are six months or more. Hang on...seven six mothers I think, and innumerable others that would last a few weeks or even when I was doing long term operations of say seven months, I don't know, a lot really, a lot of short-term ones. Long term ones, seven, I think.

LC: How long since you last engaged in an undercover role?

UCO5: End of 2006.

LC: Please could you describe a memorable case, i.e. one that comes to mind?

UCO5: Context for the kind of work I did?

LC: Yes.

UCO5: Well my role was to infiltrate organised crime groups that were dealing heroin and crack cocaine in generally in inner cities. I developed a certain expertise to do that, so I became a trouble-shooter, a little bit of a consultant as well. There was one particular operation in [redacted], where the

[redacted], which are an organised crime group based in [redacted] were taking over the heroin and crack cocaine supply in [redacted], which is a similar market structure that today is referred to as county lines, but back then they didn't exploit children to do it they just did it themselves. Two undercover cops had gone in and not managed to get near the operation and not close to it at all and I was called in to see if I could do that. I went into [redacted], spent a few weeks getting the lay of the land, and I picked two particular people who were a couple, who I manipulated into introducing me into the [redacted]. In order to manipulate them I made myself out to be a travelling shoplifter. I got them, as legend building I got them to introduce me to all the stolen property handlers in the area. So, who to take baby clothes to, who to take spirits to, electrical goods, all those kinds of things. This is all legend building. What I was doing, was for them to do the introductions I was passing some goods to them, so I was winning them over with presents. Eventually they agreed to introduce me to the [redacted], which was a strange experience because he, I can't remember the pseudonyms I gave them [redacted], so I'll call them [redacted] and [redacted]. [redacted] was terrified clearly of introducing me, he made me rehearse a cover story, which is really weird when you're running a legend, running a cover story for someone to try to teach you another one is really strange. He took me to this snooker club, where they were holding court and they sort of based their business. They took me into the toilets where a hooded figure came in and asking me what I wanted and started interrogating myself and [redacted]. Then four figures burst into the toilets surrounding me, slowly walking round me with their hoods up they started headbutting me and sort of punching me and pushing me around. I became quite convinced I wasn't going to walk out in one piece. All the time he was asking the same question rewording questions double checking things. Obviously, we passed scrutiny because they said alright then and the hooded figures left, and I ended up buying heroin and crack off him. I think I carried on working that for seven months, but by the end of it I gathered evidence of conspiracy against all of the [redacted], six of them running the scene there and everyone they were connected to and employed into their network, in the end there were ninety-six people arrested. Each of [redacted] got ten years a piece.

LC: Was this a big operation?

UCO5: Yes, it was really huge. [redacted] constabulary spent a fortune on that as well because they got help from all the surrounding forces to do as much at the arrest stage at one go as possible for

maximum impact. Then I remember speaking to the intelligence guy afterwards and he said "Yeah, we've had an astonishing result, we've interrupted the heroin and crack cocaine supply according to intelligence for two hours." Which, it was, one of those incremental times that I realised what I was doing, there was something wrong with what I was doing so to speak.

LC: Did you feel that this case affected, or any other cases affected you?

UCO5: Yeah, that one has probably affected me more than any of the others. I didn't realise it at the time that was the interesting thing, but the way that my PTSD symptoms have taken shape particularly over the last 18 months to two years has made it clear to me that that case has affected me more than other things. The imminent violence all the way through that six months period was incredible, all the time these are maniacal individuals, the main guy, I can't use his real name, but the main guy was according to intelligence was responsible seven different murders in [redacted], the one in the car that wasn't charged and convicted of the murder of [redacted]. Machine gunning. He was, was an extremely violent individual, so I knew this by reputation, but once they snatched me, they were suspicious of me, they snatched me and took me to the racecourse there and stripped me naked at gunpoint. There was all this feeling of potential violence day after day. It must have worn me out, it's odd, at the time I felt smug and felt like I could cope with anything. I didn't really feel that, I didn't really feel a massive amount of stress other than when I was working long hours, but I just put that down to being tired and working long hours you know basic stuff. Interestingly, a symptom that developed in the last twelve months and I keep getting more of these at the moment. It was last summer, so it was twelve months ago, I was at the car wash, and I started getting a massive anxiety response in the car wash, and again the next time I went to the car wash and I realise that it was the car wash that I was doing it. By response, the first thing I notice I start to breathe at the top of my lungs, which I don't know if you know is your body increasing the flow of oxygen. It's one of the first adrenaline responses. I noticed that first, and then the most intense fear of anxiety and the need to get away from the car wash. It took me a while, took me a few weeks of reflection to be hit with this memory, and it was one of the times I called one of the [redacted] to meet me, and I didn't understand the accent and I was struggling knowing where I was going, and I couldn't understand they were telling me to meet them, and they were shouting down the phone "[redacted]" and I'm thinking "[redacted]?" and he started getting really angry and he said "[redacted]" and I'm thinking "Oh the car

wash", and he's screaming at me "You better wait there, you better be there when I get there or I'm going to come and find you". So, I got to the car wash, in this sort of fight or flight situation, where mind and body is saying you really don't want to be here this is stupid, but my operational requirement was that I stand there and wait, and it went on for about twenty minutes. I went into this sort of maintain, I don't know peripheral fight or flight situation for that period of time, but the thing is he turned up and he was in a good mood and nothing happened, and I forgot about it, until last summer when I was trying to decode what was happening to me at the car wash. So, I keep getting a few of those things, and they are tending to be based from back in [redacted]. It's difficult to know how to deal with the car wash, because I basically avoid driving past it into town, but it is really disconcerting that's the best I can do really?

LC: Are there any other ways the cases have affected you to this day?

UCO5: Well my symptoms began; the most overwhelming symptoms began back in two thousand and ten and two thousand and eleven. This is to do with people like [redacted] and [redacted] or other people who I manipulated because at the time I manipulated them I knew that I was putting them at increased risk, because they were the muppets introducing the undercover cop, so I knew they were at risk of violence. I knew that their lives were going to be made much worse as a result of meeting me because generally they were problematic heroin users and they're vulnerable people. I actually picked on vulnerable people because they're easier to manipulate. So, at the time, I knew I was increasing the risk to them, but at the time I was making ethical decisions, but I did wrestle with this as an issue and I did come to the decision to do this at the time, that the end justified the means because at the end of the operation I would be making the community safer by getting rid of the gangsters. So, that was a rationale I went through each time I did it. Eventually when the penny dropped for me and realised that the reason organised crime was getting more and more violent each passing year was actually down to me, not just me, but people like me and of course I was involved in the training and development of the tactic. All that was happening was...the drugs war is an arms race. I was at the frontline with the cutting-edge tactics, and, the pushback is more violence because the most successful gangster is the one who can successfully intimidate a community into not grassing them and also who can successfully intimidate the community to make it really difficult for undercover cops. So, the violence was in response to me, and as I just demonstrated with the intelligence that the drug flow was interrupted for only two hours. Eventually it

became clear that everything I was doing was completely pointless there was literally no benefit at all in what I was doing other than locking people up that just gave an opportunity for other gangsters to come and it was just creating more violent individuals to get arrested and fill the prisons up. When I came to that realisations eventually, I then reviewed each of the decisions I had made along the way that caused harm to people that of course the ends hadn't justified the means at all and I was causing harm to people. That fact is the biggest issue for me, for PTSD really. That was my most profound symptoms in 2012/2013 into two thousand and fourteen and that would manifest in sort of extreme anxiety where I would be back manipulating those people, but it would be a short clip of a memory but it would be overwhelming, so that thought would be overpowering everything else and I would start to forget even in the moment, forget where I was, what I was doing and that sort of accompanying panic that this isn't going to stop, even though I could be aware of my thoughts, rationalising that it would stop, I was still consumed with the panic that it wouldn't and a loss of rational thought completely which is most disconcerting, considering in my role as an undercover cop and who I see myself to be, I value clear thinking and rational thought. I have formed the opinion of myself that I am someone who can think my way through anything. So, it's very disconcerting and alters how I see myself.

LC: When that doesn't match your values as a clear thinker?

UCO5: Yes, or my ego even, who I think I am.

LC: What do you see personally as the negative effects of an undercover investigation?

UCO5: Undercover policing is the nuclear option of policing. You cannot step into somebodies' lives or a community's lives, with the efficiency and proficiency of an undercover cop, living a complete lie without having a profound effect on people. It's because, you're skilled at it, and personality suits it, erm, it's always going to cause carnage, always. It erm, there was one person in [redacted] that I befriended called [redacted]. He was on bail for dealing heroin when I met him, and when he got arrested he ended up being on suicide watch and that was because he saw me as his only friend in the world and that was the...for someone who was self-medicating to deal with childhood trauma, that was the final betrayal for him and that tipped him over the edge. That one case captures the risks of undercover policing I'd say. You only have to look at the spycops scandal and to see how far that go. Even on the more peripheral

and less deep undercover work I was doing, you can still have profound impact on people.

LC: Do you feel that undercover work is stressful? More so than routine police work?

UCO5: I would say significantly more stressful than normal policing. I have had plenty of very stressful events in uniform or as a conventional detective. There were lots of times I've been at threat, lots of all sorts of incredible, horrible things, none of those both me, none of those features in the way I...in the anxiety that I've developed, none at all. I think the difference is that, each one of those incidents has been dealt with in a purely honest form of conventional communication. So, for example as a uniformed sergeant when I was first on scene at a house fire, where there were children burning to death in the house, and the mother who had skin hanging down off her arms and she'd been burned trying to save them...it's horrific but, you go through a professional approach to it, you are who you are, you are the police officer to that person. Although yeah that's a stressful thing, the difference is the absence of deception.

LC: Is there more pressure from senior officers during you undercover role?

UCO5: Is there more pressure? Erm, I would say most of the time no actually, and actually the system of how undercover policing works for the cover officer, helps provide a buffer zone between the requirements of the investigation and the requirements of the undercover police officer. It doesn't always work, it can fall down, it fell down for me in [redacted], where they didn't have the system set up correctly, but that was their lack of professionalism. I was exposed to a rather dreadful...bullying culture, a bunch of obnoxious cops who were running the operation. That wasn't really pressure from above, just a bunch of morons working for the police. So, no, I would say not, and actually...I'm trying to think how it is for other people...no I'd say that buffer zone between the work and management is, it works but also, it's understood within management that undercover work needs to be left to bring its own results. Of course, one reason why there's less pressure is that undercover policing invariably brings massive impact, it usually succeeds. The only variable is to what extent and how impactive, just how big it succeeds.

LC: Did you ever worry for your safety during an undercover operation?

UCO5: God yeah, more times than I can even remember. I suppose a really big one is, in [redacted], I had...the end of a six-month operation and there's quite a significant gangster I bought heroin

off in the first few weeks that had gone quite, laying low, but because it was early in the operation, I hadn't been wearing any camera cos you don't until you know people can trust you. Now I knew he trusted me, but I hadn't got any footage of him. So, I decided to tempt him out by offering to sell him some clothes just, so I could get some footage of him. So I got hold of some fake Stone Island jackets and he turned up with two of his gangster mates who I hadn't met before, met in this car park near the inner ring road in [redacted], quite isolated and we met up, he looked at the jackets and he said "Do you just want to sell me these or do you want to buy something?", and I says, "Well if you're carrying white, I'll have some white off you, just the 20". So, he gets this enormous block of crack, I mean massive, and sits in the front of his car and starts wrapping it and cutting a piece of cling film off it to wrap it up. Anyway, his mate then suddenly looks at me and says, "how long have you known him?" and I said, "I've known him months man". Then he pushed me up against a wall and starts searching my clothes. This is 2002 or something like that, it wasn't bond tech, and he actually found the little hole in the metal button, and he says, "man he is, fuckin is as well, he's fuckin five-o, he's fuckin' heat". So, he starts shouting to his mate, and only a few weeks before that a colleague had his camera found and he'd been beaten and left for dead up in [redacted]. So, I was under no doubt what risk I was at, and certainly these people were clearly high-end vicious gangsters. So, I just started swearing at him "What you fucking doing picking at my fucking clothes, it's not even my fucking jacket what you on about, I borrowed it off Jackie this morning, fuck off picking at my clothes" and just launched into this tirade at him, which stunned him a bit, he wasn't quite expecting this. I knew I had to move as slowly as possible and just distract him, so I took the jacket off him and started folding it up which really confused him, really, really slowly and put it in the bag. I started walking slowly away, saying "you're just a twat picking at my clothes, I don't know what you're fucking on about". Anyway, I think, I got about half way and I hear this running behind me thinking oh it worked for a while, maybe if I get one punch in, I can keep running for safety. I turn round and it's the one I know, and he said, "oh man, here's your ting, don't mind my mate he's a dickhead". I thought to myself, you really want to sell me crack now? So, he gave me it, and I gave him 20 quid and I said, "Yeah he's a dickhead, picking at my clothes, not even my fucking jacket I don't even know what he's on about." I mean his mate is screaming at him, "man I'm telling you, he's fucking five-o. Anyway, I start walking away, and obviously he's convinced him by this time, and the car come screeching after me, so I just sort of get to the edge of

the car park, and where I walked I could cut through they had to go round, but when I got to the

pavement, then they started driving down the pavement after me and I was sprinting by this time. But

because of where the road is divided from the pavement, where it approached the roundabout by the

metal railing, they could only get so far. They must have missed me by two meters I would say, one or

two meters. I've no doubt what they were trying to do. They were screeching and squealing around the

roundabout. From where I could walk where the car couldn't go and get closer to more people and there

were more people there anyway. I got back to the safe location, the debrief site, and told them the car reg

number and a description of these people and everything. The intel guy came back in and he was

laughing, and he said, "I don't know why he didn't just shoot you, there was plenty of intel there's a gun in

the car." So, we had a laugh at that.

LC: Was that the most vulnerable you've felt?

UCO5: I don't know, it's up there, it's one of them. I think that's the one where I came closest to

being killed.

LC: What personally do you see as the positive aspects of working as an undercover police

officer?

UCO5: That's a hard one. I mean, personally, I didn't...I spent a lot of time enjoying it. The reason

I was enjoying it, especially early on. It's an incredible opportunity to develop. We all like to be good at

things, and we all like to develop what we're good at. For undercover work, it's got such wider

ramifications, it's got wider effects. So, you can...you become better at observing people, and lying to

people. It is a great intellectual exercise to maintain a lie and manipulate people around you. It's such a

powerful intellectual exercise and it sharpens the mind so much, it tangibly helps concentrate on other

things away from it. For example, when I done periods of time back doing conventional detective work

and interviewing. I found myself quite clearly observing the fine details of people's body language, facial

tics and those kinds of things. That kind of personal development is invigorating but later on I found many

times where that was...sort of...in dark terms that I was only developing skills that manipulated people.

So, even that flipped later on. I don't see many benefits, there are no benefits to the work I did and that

wherever it's going on now, there's only harm being caused.

LC: Does working with other UC officers help you deal with working an undercover investigation?

UCO5: So, does working with others help? Most of the time I prefer to work on my own, and the reason for that it's easiest because you don't have to think about anyone else's reactions and your sort of a centred, single functioning unit that thinks quickly, and you can think quicker because you don't have to second guess anything. Having said that, it can be rewarding if the other person is talented, and I have worked with some really good people over time. It's getting to know and learn from them. For the most part I was happier on my own.

LC: Did you ever feel a sense of conflict between your job and those you were investigating?

UCO5: Well yes, absolutely because when I started in the police, in particular working undercover, I had a rather view of anybody who was a problematic heroin user. I took the view that they were stupid enough to have tried it in the first place and they just didn't have the willpower to get out of it. That they had the choice to seek treatment if they wanted to. So, I had a dim view. Then of course I got to know people and, I suppose you could call what I did weaponising empathy because in order to be successful you had to understand the motivations of the people you were mingling with. So, I got to know all these individuals, and they all had some reason why they were numbing themselves, and very often it was a traumatic background, something that had happened. Sometimes you would only get hints of it, but the hints were still clear. Sometimes people would tell me their life story and then it was very clear. Heroin is a very powerful painkiller of the body, but it's also a very powerful painkiller of the mind. I came to realise that they were making rational decisions, to take heroin and so I completely changed my view. Now, when you find yourself empathising and sympathising and understanding the reasons why somebody's in the position that they're in, and actually I found myself liking a lot of the people. Sometimes I was going back to debrief by police officers who hadn't had that insight and still had a harsh view. I sort of found myself at odds with my colleagues, but in sympathy with those I was manipulating. I think that's sort of part of the journey which has led to the state I'm in.

LC: Did you become emotionally attached to those you've investigated?

UCO5: I...to those I used, yes, I did. There was a guy in [redacted] called [redacted], and he was a brilliant bloke. He was a problematic heroin user, big issue seller but he was the most amazing big

issue seller I've seen, and I've known a few. He just remembered everybody's name who was walking past him in the city centre of [redacted], he was a fantastic salesperson. He just made me laugh, he was really, really good company. Now, he had a terrible story, he got into heroin in [redacted], decided to try escaping it by moving to [redacted]. He got himself into a much worse state in [redacted] and ended up dealing, then he got raided and got caught with...I think a couple thousand pounds worth of heroin, and he went to prison. He didn't provide any information to police, and where he came from in [redacted], there was rather an old school approach that if you don't grass anyone up, then they let you off the debt. Of course, the drug war progresses, and [redacted] was much farther forward than [redacted], so they said no I don't care, if you grassed us up you would be dead, you still owe us the money. He says don't be stupid I don't owe you anything I didn't grass you up. So, they kidnapped him, took him to a disused warehouse, tied him to a chair and they dripped acid onto his knees, destroyed his tendons in his knees. Now, he was a vulnerable person who really managed to cope despite his disability and the trauma he went through, and he was a very likable person, yeah, so I got quite attached to him. I got attached to loads of them, but he wasn't the one I was investigating, he was somebody who I got to know in order to investigate others. I don't remember getting attached to anyone I saw as a principle target.

LC: Are there any effects on your private life when working undercover?

UCO5: I'm sure there are. Unfortunately, my first marriage was abusive, my wife was...I received domestic abuse, only violence on three occasions, but she was very psychologically manipulative, but whether I dealt with that better or worse as a result of working undercover, I'm not entirely sure, but probably worse. But I was in the rather peculiar situation, where I was actually going away to work undercover and it was actually an escape from home life. So, I suppose I was in an unusual situation. It was an escape, that sort of personal development, being invested in something which...that dominated every waking thought. It was an escape.

LC: Did you realise it was escape after that relationship?

UCO5: No, it felt like escape at the time, it did, and also it seemed to take the heat out of the problems of the relationship, because it meant I was away for two or three nights at a time, and that seemed to give the relationship a rest, but in some ways, it was a benefit. I don't know how much impact,

I mean maybe I would have been better able to communicate, if my mind had been less focused on undercover work, I don't know.

LC: Did you find it difficult to separate your private life from your undercover work?

UCO5: I didn't, actually. I still managed to switch off completely. I'd be taking my kids swimming on a Sunday morning. I would still enjoy myself, I would still relax. I didn't find it difficult to separate at all. I could compartmentalise that. But, therein is the difference between potentially very deep undercover and, the kind of undercover work that I did. What I did, I arranged my legend and my cover story a lot of the time to make sure I had the days off that I wanted. So, I planned my entire operation to suit me, quite often, which you can't do in any conventional work, I mean you can if you're self-employed. So, yeah, I compartmentalised it all pretty well. Of course, I wasn't aware then the damage it was causing me that I am suffering things now that I was actually unaware of at the time, I think that's really...It's just really difficult to think through. It's like one of those...and again this is another thing where my own rational thinking seems to have escaped me. Before I really suffered from PTSD type symptoms, I would only think something through once, even if the conclusion was that there was no conclusion, but I find myself thinking the same things, revisiting things over and over, which isn't rational, it's going in circles.

LC: So, at what point had you realised you had these symptoms? Did you make that connection that it was to do with that work?

UCO5: No, I mean the first symptoms I had got, I put it entirely down to my relationship, completely, so I had a breakdown at work, I went off sick. Up until the point I went off sick from work in 2011, I had been having all sorts of problems, I couldn't concentrate, organise my work. I was avoiding things, and I was a mess to be honest, and considering I was a DS at the time, supervising serious crime investigations, I was a bit of a mess and it was drawing attention to myself as a mess. Anyway, I went off sick in 2011. I put that mostly, well entirely down at the time to my domestic situation, because she got a lot worse, I couldn't cope with it, and I needed to escape from it. I managed myself and the kids' escape from that, and, but the stress from that was huge. All my nightmares, all my stress all my anxieties were about her, you know all my nightmares it was waking up and she was there stood watching me. It was entirely all of my mind was focused on that. I went on antidepressants...sertraline...which helped helped,

for two months that helped more significantly than I had expected it to. Yeah, for the first twelve months I was convinced that all stress was that. Only when I felt safe from her, and that was sort of concluded and separated, I mean, kids refused to see her, she was out of the way. She made accusations against me and got me arrested, which was actually really, really helpful because, in being arrested and bailed, I was bailed not to contact her, which meant she had to stay away from me, which, that was one of the best things she had done because she couldn't keep trying to emotionally manipulate me. So, anyway, when that was all concluded, I thought this is great but then, as soon as that faded that's when I started getting profound anxiety about the people I manipulated. So, one faded just into the next, and I wasn't better, I was less anxious because the sertraline, there's no doubt about that, but it was getting distressing that, the stress this feeling of being unwell wasn't going, even though I was much happier about the situation with her and it was just being replaced by other things. So, then that's when I realised perhaps in review that, it was a combination of factors which has led to that. Then when I reviewed the things I was doing at work, or what I was not doing at work, it seems likely there was a big collection of factors that contributed to the way that I was.

LC: How would you normally unwind?

UCO5: Oh, this is a problem, I unwind by drinking alcohol. Which is a problem because it has become a response...a first response feeling that I'm feeling anxious and it's a problem. Certainly in 2011/2012 I was drinking huge amounts. I've always drank alcohol, but it's a police culture thing and I've always liked it a lot. It was a significant problem in 2012, I was drinking enormous amounts. I mean, I have several days off at a time now, but I still consider it a problem, something I have to keep an eye on.

LC: Even now?

UCO5: Even now yeah, but much reduced problem. I am aware that alcohol can make PTSD symptoms worse and make it harder to actually deal with it as well, I'm aware of the physiological and psychological link between the two. Coping strategies...well this is an interesting, medication side to this, I realised in 2014 that sertraline was no longer helping me as an antidepressant. Whereas it stopped me from feeling low, it also put a ceiling on how much better I could feel, so for example, I'm a big music lover, and I relax listening to music and it gives me great joy. The sertraline, it was clearly that there was

something stopping me connecting to the music so that I could feel really joyous from it, and that was the sertraline, so I had to come off that because it was becoming counterproductive and it clearly wasn't helping my symptoms really. It had helped initially a lot, but then it was counterproductive. So, then that allowed me to explore and then go back to things like music and reading, I mean reading, I read a lot, reading relaxes me and gives me lots of pleasure. I've been a runner for a long time, I tried to get back into running but I find it hard, well I do feel better if I can run a couple of times a week. Just spending time chilling with my wife really, all of those kinds of things, but I have to consciously make myself, oh this is going to make me feel better, so I have to be aware of what's going to help. In terms of coping strategies for individual things that trigger, a lot of it's just basically avoiding, but that's quite hard, because a recent trigger I've had is erm, it's tight rows of terraced houses, as in smaller working terraced houses, on a gloomy day and that relates to [redacted], [redacted], and [redacted], the kind of streets where so many things have happened, it's sort of a collective thing. I only discovered that quite recently.

LC: So, when you can try to avoid as best you can them kinds of layouts of streets?

UCO5: Yeah, exactly, but it's...it feels a bit strange, and I always feels like people are going to just not get what I'm talking about, because I do so many things that take confidence, you know I do public speaking, lots of media appearances, lots of tv and radio and these kid of things which I can sail through without the slightest problem, but if I find myself in exploring a town and I'm faced with several rows of terraced houses I can feel like I need to run away, but not know which direction to run in so there's a sensation of feeling trapped. So, it's...it's just a really odd situation that I'm, well actually another major coping strategy for me is actually doing what I'm doing, so this doesn't help for the more recent symptoms I've had, the sort of car wash and terraced houses and those kinds of things, but it helps significantly with the symptoms that I started to develop more in 2013/2014 of the profound sense of guilt. That actually by taking the time and writing a book, doing interviews for the book and explaining to people how I feel and what the realities of the situation is has greatly reduced the symptoms of guilt.

LC: You mentioned running earlier, are there other ways you exercise, does it relieve stress?

UCO5: Sometimes I'll cycle to the supermarket and back, and then I'll do some weights and that can help me feel chilled out. It's not huge, but it's a little benefit. But then I go many days without anxiety

at all you know but, I can go a week without any symptom, but then I can have three times in a week where it's really, gets tiring and you're thinking oh enough, stop.

LC: Did you exercise more or less when you were working undercover?

UCO5: I did yeah, I did lots of exercise, I was still doing fell running and I think the first fell marathon I did was 2004, so I was still doing undercover then, and I was still training for fell marathons at the time.

LC: Do you feel that you can talk to people? i.e. family, other officers, professionals.

UCO5: I think this has been one of the most beneficial things for me, in dealing with this, is that I spent so many years being secretive and taking the view and approach that I'm going to be honest with everyone about every aspect including my health has helped. Now, people might think that this is exposing oneself and being honest about these things is a risk or it's...but I find it empowering, empowering's probably the wrong word, I find it...it means I can try take control of it slowly, and that honesty is a very important thing to me now. I think perhaps because it's the dishonesty that's behind so much of the damage, that I feel being completely honest and ethical is...well it does help, it does help me.

LC: I know you mentioned a few coping strategies, but at the time did you employ any coping strategies while you were working undercover?

UCO5: No, not really. I used to be very pleased with myself after something which would be preferably dangerous was just how well I coped with it. It seemed to me water off a duck's back that yeah, I could shake, I'd be pale, but I'd quickly recover I'd be able to write my evidence I'd be able to get on with it, and I loved the reputation of being someone who could cope with it, absolutely, it's a big ego boost. I did, I had an astonishing reputation and I did the work for so long. I was definitely unluckier than most with how many dangerous situations I had, definitely and yeah, I just thought wow, look at me I'm someone who can cope with this.

LC: Is there anything you wish you had known when you began undercover work that you know now?

UCO5: Yeah, I wish I had known just how much damage was going one when I wasn't aware of

it. I had no idea that there would be that I would not be aware that these things were causing me long term damage. I just had no idea, no matter what, there was some information you know you need to be careful and people say oh are you okay and they'd have a theoretical mandatory counselling session once a year but unfortunately it was really poor quality and didn't treat it very seriously and I know it's poor quality now because I spent a lot of time trying to learn about my own state of mind.

LC: So, looking back to the sessions you received they were not helping you understand?

UCO5: They were just pointless, exactly not in the slightest, I had some very good counselling in 2012 for 10 months and it was very good, it was really good counselling that's when the person first pointed out that I was...that I appeared to have symptoms of PTSD.

LC: What would you advise an officer thinking of becoming an undercover officer?

UCO5: Well if it's for drugs, don't do it because it's unethical. That would be the first thing. For undercover work that's legitimate as a police tactic, I would say be aware that every time you have that adrenaline response there is a, some kind of permanent record in your brain going on, and that you have to try to compartmentalise that and try to understand it as it's happening.

LC: Has this work had any negative impact on your professional and personal life?

UCO5: Yes, hugely, I mean I'm not as comfortable or relaxed as I was, because I have visitations of profound anxiety which makes personal life harder than it was in simple terms. In terms of professional yeah, it ended my career I mean I'm not complaining about that I mean at least now...I wouldn't change anything I have to say because having gone through the experiences that I have, I'm now duty bound to explain to people the reality of the war on drugs and I have the evidence and experience in order to articulate that. So, in all conscience if I went back in time to change things I would not do.

LC: Would or did you seek support during an investigation?

UCO5: I was finding myself being ill, in a job in [redacted], and I'd all manner of different things going on, medical, just all sorts going wrong with my body and I even had dry skin and my cheeks split and started weeping. So obviously my whole body was really under huge stress. I saw the doctor and he said "what do you do for a living? Have you considered you might be under stress and working too hard?"

So, I mentioned that to my cover officer when I went back and carried on working and he said, "Oh we'll stop the job, that's it, you've got to see a counsellor to see how bad you are". So, the next day I went to see the counsellor and their recommendation was just work fewer hours, so you can see the quality of the counselling. I did, I went back and they tried to make me work fewer hours, but the demands of the job meant that once I'd got introduced to this particular gangster lieutenant, I had to just go with the job, I can't just say "Oh I'm knocking off now", but that was written into the agreement "You must work fewer hours", but you don't do that in undercover work, you work when you need to work. So, that was...but then I'm not blaming the system there completely because I hadn't got my head round exactly what was going wrong with my body and mind at the time.

LC: What about after an investigation would you seek support?

UCO5: I didn't really. I did notice though that after every long-term job I did, the tiredness went on much longer every time, and by tiredness, I mean waking up even after a good sleep and not feeling awake, and I put that down to, when you're running on adrenaline so much and the adrenaline wakes you up every day and then you don't have any, it's almost like a caffeine withdrawal. You have such a long period of time, but it used to be 3 or 4 days and then it became a week and then it was two weeks and then it was a month, where a lot of the time feeling muggy headed and not being actually able to wake up without a shot of adrenaline, but I didn't seek any support. At the end of each undercover operation they gave you a week off that was in addition to any annual leave or time off allocation. It just took me longer to get my head straight each time.

LC: Progressively longer each time?

UCO5: Yeah, but I didn't ask for any help.

LC: Do or did you reflect upon cases once they had ended?

UCO5: Yeah, I reflected on them, I always reflected upon the people I had manipulated and certainly reflected on that a great deal, but all with the reasons I've talked about, I don't think I've got anything to add to that,

LC: Do you think that undercover work has changed in recent years and if so how?

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UCO5: Well I've been out of it for...since 2010 really, I still have a lot, I knew what was going on with undercover work then. Essentially, I very much doubt it, there's been...I mean I'm aware of so many people who have suffered mental health problems from it, I do hope they're trying to look after people better but as for the details of the job I don't really know.