

Keep Calm and Carry On: An International Comparison of Stress in Law Enforcement

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This presentation will show the results of a comprehensive review of the literature and a cross-cultural comparison of law-enforcement related stress in the United States and the United Kingdom. In the formation of this comparison, we will obtain a better understanding of law enforcement exposure to stress and its effects. By comparing the stress experienced by law enforcement officers in these seemingly similar countries, we conceptualize the potential causes of these similarities and differences. More specifically, the organization/structure of law enforcement, support networks, community conditions, and the police subculture in these countries will be analyzed. This analysis will show that U.S. officers appear more likely to exhibit negative effects of stress as a result of avoidant coping strategies, while U.K. officers appear more likely to exhibit negative effects of stress but can cope more easily because of problem-focused coping strategies. A systematic comparison serves to inform our policy recommendations related to stress response and preventative strategies for law enforcement. We recommend that the U.S. needs to adopt programs that emphasize healthier coping models and that the U.K. should focus on emotional aspects of coping for their law enforcement officers.

Information about the Authors:

Holly Buckman is a junior undergraduate student studying psychology, sociology and criminal justice who plans to attend graduate school after graduation. After graduate school, Holly plans on spending a few years working at a non-profit that helps at-risk women and children. Assistant Professor Amanda Zelechowski is a licensed attorney and clinical psychologist, specializing in the areas of trauma and forensic psychology. Holly wanted to participate in a research project during her semester abroad at Valpo's Cambridge, England Study Centre. Having an interest in psychology and law, Holly asked Professor Zelechowski if she would like to sponsor the project. Together they decided that Holly should capitalize on her time outside of the U.S. by making her project into a cross-cultural comparison of literature on the stress experienced by law enforcement in the U.S. and the U.K.

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