Coping Strategies amongst Journeyman Lineman

A qualitative research about how journeyman lineman cope with stress in their work field and at home

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“Stress is projected to be primary driven of employee disability rates in the future. As a health cost to national economies and business mental disability is out of control. The Harvard World Health report has called it an "unheralded" crisis because of widespread ignorance among business leaders and economist government and the general population. At the heart of this neglect lies the stigma associated with mental health problems.

Research over the last 50 years on stress, trauma and health in psychology, and sociology, have further demonstrated the interrelatedness of human problem. Stress and trauma are not only universal; they are at once biological, psychological and social.” (deVries & Wilkerson, 2003, pp 47)
Abstract

Stress has been defined as the change in one's physical or mental state in response to a situation that can pose a challenge or a threat. There are times when we are faced with a challenging situation that will affect us both physically and mentally. When it comes to stress, the signs can be cognitive, emotional, physical or behavioral. Physiologists define stress as how the body reacts to a stressor. The aim and questions for this study was to see what the major stress factors was at work for the journeyman lineman, how the stress from work affected the family life, and how they coped with the stress. I used a qualitative method since the purpose was to acquire knowledge of the respondents own thoughts and feelings, regarding how they experienced stress in the work field. I did a qualitative data analyze on the interviews with help of content analyze to help find themes, patterns, and meaning in the different answers. The result showed that depending on how the participants coped with stress would influence the impact the stress had on the family life. Depending on the work, and the responsibility they had would affect how they perceived the job as stressful or not.

Key words: Stress, coping, family
1. Introduction

“To live is not only to survive”
-Renblad, 2003

Stress has been defined as the change in ones physical or mental state in response to a situation that can pose a challenge or a threat. There are times when we are faced with a challenging situation that will affect us both physically and mentally (Colligan & Higgins, 2006).

Stress plays a big part in our life nowadays, it can either be from work, or our personal and social environment. As individuals we all handle and cope with stress in different ways, some seek professional help, some turn to substances abuse and some rely on their support system from family, friends or even ones pet.

Stress not only affect people, but also the workforce and the economy. Within EU alone 350 million work days are lost because of stress-related health issues which leads to a cost of at least € 20 billion each year. In the US, businesses lose $300 billion annually as a result of the affects stress have, that will say, lowered productivity, days absent, and healthcare cost (Limm, Angerer, Heinmueller, Marten-Mittag, Nater & Guendel, 2010). In the 1990s stress cost US businesses between $150-$180 billion annually, so in the last 20 years that cost have gone up an additional $120-$150 billion (Vagg, Spielberger & Wasala, 2002), which is a big concern within the workforce about how stress is being handled, and the precautions that are being taken to reduce stress, and stressful environments.

1.1 Aim and research questions

The aim for this study was to see how journeyman lineman from the same work environment handle and cope with stress in their work field and at home. The main questions were, what are the major stress factors at work, how did the stress from work affect the family life, and how did the journeyman lineman cope with the stress.
1.2 Journeyman lineman

Being a journeyman lineman is a very demanding job, and it is among the more dangerous jobs out there with their work demands and long hours under stressful conditions. A normal work week can be between 60-100 hours, night and day, and while working storm, they can work shifts as long as 42 hours, with only 6-8 hours off, and they are usually on call. Everyday they handle 120-33000 volts which is 100 times more voltage then an indoor electrician deals with. Journeyman lineman works with electrical power generators, grids and lines that have enough energy to light up a town. In this line of work one mistake can cause a power line to fall, explosions, loss of a limb or the loss of someones life. Safety is number one, but accidents can happen, and when they do, they are more often then less life altering which gives this type of work a high level of stress.

A journeyman lineman works with electricity in all its phases, such as, troubleshooting, maintenance and repair of overhead distribution, and transmission lines. They string and maintain wire, install and maintain insulators, transformers, junction boxes and sockets, and on top of all that they have to supervise apprentices. Journeyman lineman also install and maintain equipment that uses electricity, such as lights, heating and air systems, and generators (Burton, 2010).

Journeyman lineman are one of the most important people working behind the scenes to provide the power. As a journeyman lineman, they are also part of the first responder team in time of a natural or man-made disasters. During the times of natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, and snow/ice storms, peoples lives often depend on the work of a lineman. In time like these, lineman come together from all over the country in order to protect people from the dangers of downed power lines (Holcomb, 2011).

1.3 Stress

The term stress was first used in the biological context in the 1930s. Stress is a term in psychology and biology, and it is borrowed from physics and engineering. The term stress refers to the consequence of the failure of an organism, human or animal, to respond
adequately to mental, emotional or physical demands, whether actual or imagined (Wikipedia, 2011). Stress however, had none of its contemporary meaning before the 1950s. Stress came from a form of the Middle English destresse, that came via Old French from Latin stringere, “to draw tight”, and it has been used in physics in the referring of an internal distribution from a force on a material body that resulted in a strain.

The term stress was used in psychological circles and by the advocates of holistic medicine in the 1920s and 1930s to refer to mental strain or a harmful environmental agent that could cause illness. The endocrinologist Hans Selys was the first one to use stress in the biological context, and his usage of it arose out of his 1930s experiments. He was the one of the first ones to use stress, not only as an agent, but as the state of organism as it respond and adapt to the environment. In 1934 Walter Cannon used the term homeostasis (standing still) to refer to external factors that disrupted. In the 1970s stress was of great concern to the general population and more research was called to better approach the issues, by the 1990s stress was a big part of modern scientific understanding in all its area of physiology and human function and focus grew on stress in certain settings such as workplace stress (Wikipedia, 2011).

The neurologist Walter Cannon was the first one to be recognized for that stress could be emotional as well as physical. In his experiment fight or flight he demonstrated that both man and animal shared the same responses when threaten. Cannon was able to trace these reactions to the release of neurotransmitters from part of the adrenal gland, that will say, the medulla, which secretes two neurotransmitters, epinephrin and norepinephrine, in response to stress (Conrad Stöppler, 2011). This leads to the physiological effects in the fight or flight response, such as rapid heart rate, increased alertness, etc. Selye extended Cannon’s observation when he included the pituitary gland as part of the body’s stress response. The pituitary gland is a small gland at the base of the brain, and it is important in the physiological response to stress by the other part of the adrenal gland known as the cortex (Conrad Stöppler, 2011).

When it comes to stress, it can be cognitive, emotional, physical, or behavioral. The signs of stress include poor judgment, negative outlook, worrying, moodiness, irritability, agitation,
the inability to relax, feeling lonely, or isolated, anxiety, depressed, aches and pains, irritable bowel syndrome, nausea, dizziness, chest pain, rapid heartbeat, sleeping to much or not enough, and social withdrawal (Wikipedia, 2011).

The psychologist Richard Lazarus was a pioneer in the study of emotion and stress, especially their relation to cognition, argued that for a psychosocial situation to be stressful, the individual has to first appraise it as being so. Also that a cognitive process of appraisal is important in determining if a situation is a potential threat, or harmful, a challenge, or just benign. It has shown that people under excessive stress have a greater tendency to engage in unhealthy behavior such as alcohol and drug abuse and smoking. These unhealthy behaviors can further increase the severity of symptoms related to stress, often leading to a “vicious cycle” of symptoms and unhealthy behaviors (Conrad Stöppler, 2011). The amount of stress in our life is dependent on individual factors, such as our physical health, the quality of our interpersonal relationships, the responsibilities we have, other peoples dependence upon us, traumatic events, etc.

If not managed, stress can cause damage to our body. While we are under stress our parasympathetic part will try to bring the body to a state of calm in order to save energy and to work on rehabilitate and to construct. The parasympathetic part is part of the automatic nervous system that counterbalances the action of sympathetic nerves (www.stresspage.com, 2011). When our sympathetic nervous system is activated by stress, our body is in a state of readiness that requires energy since all the blood goes to the skeletal muscles due to the fight or flight reactions (www.stresspage.com, 2011). When suffering from chronic stress, the body is in a prolonged state of distress since the stressors never got removed, but the body’s resources are becoming depleted because the parasympathetic system has not been able to bring the body to a calm state to save energy. At this stage, the body’s vital resources are depleted from the immune system, which leaves us vulnerable to illness, and even death (Colligan & Higgins, 2006).

The stress that are unpredictable, and uncontrollable seems to be responsible for most of the damage stress can cause, on the other hand, the stress we can cope with and handle is not that bad. In fact some stress can trigger new personality growth, and give individuals healthy
adjustment changes, because we learn from these stressors, which can lead to a prediction of their recurrence. It since has been shown that excessive stress in the early years can lead to a negative affect, both for the physical and mental health. Experiments has shown that stress hormones can decrease brain connection and the number of ban cells in important areas, such as the limbic system. Stress during the teen years can carry an increased risk of suicide due to depression and anxiety (Conrad Stöppler, 2011).

2. Earlier research

Studies has shown that close to 20% of Americans suffer from a diagnosable mental illnesses each year, such as, depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and obsessive compulsive disorder. These are the four of the top ten leading causes for disability in the United States. Even though burnout is becoming greater understood to represent a serious mental health condition, however, it is still not as well recognized as a “mental illness” as depression and other psychiatric diagnoses. Burnout is defined as “a pathological syndrome in which emotional depletion and maladaptive detachment develop in response to prolonged occupational stress”. Stress-related conditions that are not clearly defined as a mental illness may also lead to excessive anxiety, exhaustions, stress, sleep disturbance, anger, and irritability. It have shown that substance abuse often happen in response to stress (Brown, Goske & Jonson, 2009).

Russell and Roach (2002) wrote in their article occupational stress, that they have seen evidence about the harmful affects of psychological stress in the workplace. It has been linked with coronary heart disease, hypertension, peptic ulcers and type 2 diabetes, however, the most direct indicator of its affect has been the dramatic increase in number and cost of workers compensation claims for work-related stress.

Brown et al. (2009) and Wickramasinghe (2010) both wrote in their articles about stress and the impact it can have of ones mental health, that will say, burnout, depression, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and distress. Wickramasinghe (2010) goes on by saying that stress experienced at work can have a harmful outcome for health, well-beingand, and the morale of individual employees. It contributes to a great part of workers compensation claims,
healthcare cost, disability, absenteeism and productivity losses. Work plays a central part in many peoples lives and the impact of job stress is an important issue both for the employees and the organizations they work for. It has been said that the success of any effort to reduce job stress will depend on the right diagnose, since different stressors require different actions.

Cheung and Tang (2009) wrote about quality of work life in their article and the relationship between surface acting and work-to-family interference. They found in their study that deep acting and expressions of normal felt emotions did not relate to work-to-family interference, and that family-to-work interference was an important connection of the use of surface acting in workplace.

Work family interference refers to a situation when the pressure from work and family roles makes it incapable of existing together, which makes it hard for the individual to take part in both the work role and the family role, which can result in work conditions interfering with the family domain. Family-to-work interference affects more strongly with family-related factors, such as high family stress and conflict, long hours spent in non-work, and insufficient family support. Consequences of work family interference include negative job and health outcomes, such as job burnout, psychological distress, and job/life dissatisfaction. It has shown that building new resources, but also drawing on existing work resources is important in dealing with different demands at the workplace concerning stress. It has shown that by having job rewards, job security, chances for promotions, and good work relations with costumers and coworkers, to be effective in offsetting energy spent on reducing and coping with work stress. This can lead to less pressure from work that will interfere with the family life. Studies about this has proven that emotional tension is connected to a great source of work stress, and it is also related to negative job and illness, which can lead to work interfering with the family life in a negative way (Cheung & Tang, 2009).

In earlier studies in human stress theories, it has been assumed that stress comes from person-environment interaction, and that work stress could be affected by subjective emotional and physiological reactions in different stressful situations. Limms et al. (2010) article about quality work life showed that better work positions and specific job demands may lead to better health and coping capabilities compared to blue collar workers. This correlate with the
earlier studies about stress, and the person-environment interaction, and how the work can be
effected by subjective emotions. Since a better work position gives you a less stressful
environment, which then can lead to better health, which makes it easier to cope with set
backs and other stressors in the surrounding. Blue collar workers usually work in a more
stressful environment, with high work demands, hard work, and long hours, which makes
them more of a target for stress since they more likely to be emotional vulnerable, due to
exhaustion.

The aim for Netterstrøm and Bechs (2010) study was to find out the long term affect stress
conditions had on individuals. The study was a four month intervention program where 73%
of the participants was referred to a stress clinic. The participants was shown how to handle
everyday stress, such as breathing and relaxation exercises. The result from this study showed
that sick leave decreased from 52% to 16% during the two years in the intervention group.
Netterstrøm and Bech (2010) could also see a significant difference between the control
group and the intervention group after four months since the control group was after the
intervention group. When it came to return to work during the first four months, the
intervention group was 5.4 times greater then the control group

This study (Netterstrøm & Bech, 2010) shows that it is possibly to increase the rate people
return to work after using the elements from the stress program. Unfortunately the stress
program did not have an impact on attachment to the labor market in the long run, however,
after the one year follow-up, the participants said that the activities they were thought in the
stress program had made them more active, which lead to that they were feeling healthier,
which is important since the stress related health issues cost the US businesses $300 billion a
year. Looking at those numbers, and since in the last 20 years the stress related cost went up
$150 billion, which can implicit that even though workplace stress is a big research field, it
seems, just by looking at the numbers, you could tell, that not much had been done in an
attempt to lower these numbers.
2.1 Coping

Personality and social relationships play an important role in the aspects of stress and how we cope (DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005). When it comes to coping with stress, some studies have shown that certain personality traits are associated with which problem-solving and coping strategies the individual use. It has also been shown in studies that a negative correlation between wishing to do what is right, the workload, stress from a lack of confidence and competence, that certain personality traits may have a buffering affect on workplace stress (Burgess, Irvine & Wallymahmed, 2010).

While coping with stress, some individuals will turn to drugs and alcohol in an attempt to stun their emotions. The reason that individuals under stress turn to substance abuse is an attempt to get away from the stress, get numb, or to fall a sleep. The individuals that use this method to cope are in general just adding to the stress. This can further lead to broken family relations due to the inability to care for others, loss of job due to disruptive behavior in the workplace, or illness, due to substance abuse (www.stresspages.com, 2011).

Wickramasinghe (2010) wrote in her article about two different coping strategies that are being used to alter the source of the stressor. The first one is problem focused coping where the individual try to use instrumental support, problem solving, planning and/or tries to increase the effort in an attempt to alter the source of the stressor. The second coping strategy is emotion focused coping where the individual seek social support, use wishful thinking or behavioral withdrawal to cope with the stressor.

Studies have shown (Burgess et al., 2010) that some people are able to thrive and maintain their enthusiasm despite the stress in the work environment. For some individual they will become distressed, which can result in sickness, absence and ill health. Stress have also proven to have an affect between stress and an increase in errors, less effective team work, more dissatisfaction from serve users and high absence rate in industry workers at the organizational level (Burgess et al., 2010).
It have been shown that stressors can lead to a negative result on most bodily systems, and it can produce longer lasting effects, which can lead to severe chronic or even acute physical health problems. In the psychological perspective, stress is associated with the feeling of anxiety, depression, subjective fatigue, reduced confidence and self esteem, which can affect the ability to perform work-related tasks. Coping with stress, Lazarus (Burgess et al., 2010) research was the starting point for many researchers with his analysis that stress consists of two appraisal processes. The first appraisal process is the primary appraisal of the threat, and the secondary appraisal process is how to respond, and its interaction with the individual’s execution of the coping response.

It has been argued (Burgess et al., 2010) that coping is a transaction between the person and the event, and that coping changes over time. Younger individuals tend to distant themselves or confront the problem, while younger adults problem solve, and older people tend to use escape/avoidance and self blame more often. However, some people develop certain behaviors in dealing with stressors, and by studying these behaviors it is possible to predict how that individual will react in a new situations. Some individuals use humor as an emotion focused coping strategy, and that can act as a mean of releasing tension. Using humor in the work environment can been seen as a method of coping, and the negative feelings can develop into positive acceptance which would help with releasing some of the tension stress can cause.

In the past 30 years research has emerged that are demonstrating the beneficial affects of social support on individuals from healthy and unhealthy areas. Social support can be affective in enhancing individuals because it acts as coping assistance. Social relationships may influence ways of coping in a number of ways. Studies suggest that those individuals who report greater satisfaction with support also report greater use of adaptive ways of coping with stressful situations. It is also suggested, that when individuals feel supported they use a bigger variety of coping strategies. This suggest that support encourage the individual to make an effort to cope, which may increase the satisfaction with the support, and the coping efforts (DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005).

In a stressful work environment, managers can help the employees to cope with the workplace stress by altering the working conditions. They can also remove stress related
obstacles such as work overload, isolation, and the lack of independence. By taking these steps the managers can create an environment that the employees can grow and flourish. In situations where altering the work environment to create less stress is not possible, they should provide the employees with programs and links to stress management resources, so they can get the right help, and the stress can be handled before it increases into physical and mental illness (Colligan & Higgins, 2006). Steps to prevent a stressful environment is important to take since most individuals not only work for an income, but also for stimulation, satisfaction and social contact. Having a management style that is productive and that demonstrate interest in the workforce and its wellbeing, will significantly reduce feelings like job associated pressure and stress (Holmes, 2001).

2.2 Work, stress and health

Work stress is in most cases described as an employee’s feelings that is associated with difficult working conditions such as, tension, anxiety, frustration, worry, emotional exhausted and distressed (Wickramasinghe, 2010). It has shown that chronic job stress can be associated with a range of negative health issues, like cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal problems, or alcohol dependence. Between 50-60% of stress related illnesses leads to work absents (Limm et al., 2010). There is a number of factors that can cause workplace stress. Some of these factors are a toxic work environment, negative workload, isolation, hours, conflicts, development barriers, difficult work relationships, etc. Even though stress can help meet our goal and stimulate positive productivity, it can also lead to emotional turmoil, burnout and physical illness (Colligan & Higgins, 2006).

When it comes to burnout, which is defined as a pathological syndrome that is an emotional exhaustion, feeling of inefficacy, and it can lead to substance abuse. Even though burnout may not lead to abusive behavior per se, it can still lead to higher rate of self reported errors and accidents in the workplace. Burnout will also affect all the areas of your life, your family, and eventually it will also affect your social life. Burnout is not recognizes as mental illness as depression, but it is looked upon as a work related illness (Brown et al., 2009) (www.stresspages.com, 2011).
According to a recent survey, stress is becoming one of the bigger causes of work disability where 40% of job turnover is due to stress, and 25% of the workers perceive work as their biggest life stress. Some of factors that can be taking in to account, is the rapid social changes, time compression of modern life, and the intensity of activities at work. It has shown in studies (deVries & Wilkerson, 2003) that the psychosocial factors, such as higher performances expectation with low rewards have more affect on employees health than their lifestyle. This lack of job control can be seen as a threat to the cardiovascular system the same way smoking is. Stress and depression are nowadays as serious as the public health problem such as infectious diseases, and AIDS, due to the fact that mental illnesses have a longer recovery time, which leads to a high work replacement cost and disability payments (deVries & Wilkerson, 2003).

In Vaggs et al. (2002) article about affects of organizational level and gender on stress in the workplace, it showed that employees at the higher levels experienced stress more often in the making of critical decision, and dealing with crisis then workers at a lower level, they reportedly experienced more stress from inadequate salaries and the lack of advancement. It has also shown, that highly stressed employees were more prone to change jobs more often, and that they experienced more negative health issues then the employees that were less stressed. In the lower organizational levels, the workers also experienced low job satisfaction, and the workers that routinely preformed work that required minimal skill experience had a greater absentee from work then workers in less routinely jobs did.

2.3 Home and work interference, in regarding to stress

In Lourel, Ford, Gamassou, Guéguen and Harmans (2009) article it showed that family stressors and support are related to work satisfaction, and that work stressors and support is related to the satisfaction at home. It also showed that negative WHI (Work Home Interference) is associated with complains at work, which was related to job satisfaction and psychological distress. WHI is also connected to role overload in the home and the intention to end a marriage or a romantic relationship. WHA and HWI (Home Work Interference) has at a psychopathological level shown to be the onset for depressive symptoms, anxiety, stress and psychosomatic complaints.
Similar findings have been found in other studies (Lourel et al., 2009), that a positive WHI, was positively related to job satisfaction and negative WHI, was negatively linked to job satisfaction. It has also been found that the control over work time is related to work/family balance, and satisfaction. HWI is not only the family or domestic life, but also considering the broader aspect of life outside the workplace. The personal life can create stress, and it can have a negative affect on work, just as the stress at work can have a negative affect on the family life. This can create a vicious cycle, where the interpersonal relations can be impaired by the individual irritability that can reduce the availability for social support, which can be hard to escape (Holmes, 2001).

3. Method

I decided to do a qualitative study on how journeyman lineman handles and copes with stress, and how it affect there family life. I used a qualitative method, since the purpose was to acquire knowledge from the respondents own thoughts about how they experience stress in their work field. The type of interview structure that I used to conduct this was an unstandardized interview (Berg, 2007) for the simply fact that I wanted to get the respondents own thoughts and feelings regarding the level of stress, and how they handle it in their trade.

3.1 Participants

The respondents that participated in this study were electrical journeyman lineman. Five out of the seven participants worked for PAR electric in Orange County, California, which is a subcontractor for the utility company Edison, which is the company the other two works for. For the study I conducted interviews with seven respondents that had between 10 to 46 years in the power line trade, all with, or from a background as a journeyman lineman.

3.2 Interviews

The interview were performed out in the work field of the respondents, where I also got a chance to observe their work. The respondents were contacted, and given information about the research by telephone. All the respondents were given the opportunity whether or not the
wanted to participate, the same opportunity was given before the interview started. The interviews were recorded after the respondents were asked if they still wanted to participate in the research.

3.3 Interview guide

I had three questions as a guideline for these interviews, and they were, stress factors at work, affect on family life, and coping strategies. I followed these guidelines with the purpose of being able to analyze the interviews correctly.

3.4 Instrument

I used an IC recorder, which is a digital voice recorder, to record the interviews that I was conducting. I also on some occasions used a pen and paper to take down notes.

3.5 Analyze

I used a qualitative data analyze in this study to analyze the interviews. The analyze was performed in several stages. After the interviews were done I listened to them before I started transcribed the interviews word for word from the IC recorder. When the transcribe was done I used content analyze, which is a way to carefully examine the interviews in an effort to find themes, patterns and meaning in the different answers I got from the respondents that I interviewed. By doing this, it reduced and transformed the data to be more readily accessible. After the content analyze was done, I analyzed my findings and compered them with earlier research to so if the conclusions that I reached from my analyze could be verified.

3.6 Ethical aspects

The participation in this study was voluntary, and the participants was told twice, both in the telephone call, and before the interviews, whether or not, they wanted to participate in the study. Anonymity was also guaranteed during the interviews, which they were told about, both in the telephone call, and before the interview started. Another ethical issue was the
personal questions that would be asked during the interviews regarding substance abuse and infidelity, and the participants were told beforehand, that if they did not feel comfortable answering those questions they did not have to. If they did answers them but after the interview was done changed their mind, that those answers would not be part in the study.

4. Results

Respondent A is a 39 year old Forman with 19 years as a journeyman lineman who is in charge over a 4 man crew, respondent B, a 51 year old cable splicer with 27 years as a journeyman lineman, respondent C, a 64 year old Construction Coordinator (CC) with 46 years in the trade, respondent D, a 33 year old journeyman lineman with 12 years in the trade, respondent E, a 47 year old General Forman (GF) with 17 years in the trade, respondent F, a 27 year old journeyman lineman with 10 years in the trade, and respondent G, a 65 year old Project General Supervisor with 43 years in the trade.

The reason for getting in to the trade

When asking people the reason why they chose the career path they did, one might get many different answers. For people to chose a career that is known to be a stressful one and hard on the body, one might ask why they did it.

There is different ways people can get started in this trade. The most common ways people get in to it, is that they start out as a groundman, or as an operator before they apply to the apprenticeship to become a journeyman lineman.

Respondent A, C, D, F and G all started out working as groundman before they decided to apply for the apprenticeship. Respondent A was 22 years old when he first started out as a groundman, which he only did for 6 months, since he got in to the apprenticeship the first time he applied for it. Both respondent C, D and F was 18 years old when they got started as groundman. Respondent D did it for two years and respondent F for three years before applying for the apprenticeship program to become journeyman lineman.
Respondent G, with 43 year in the trade, and when I conducted the interview with him, he only had one more day before retiring. He moved out to California when he was 16 years old, got drafted for the WWII when he was 19 years old. When he was 21 he got out of the service and went to work for Edison, the utility company, as a groundman, and has been there ever since.

Both respondent B (went straight to be a journeyman lineman) and G (worked for 14 years for the cable and phone company) did not work as groundmen before they joined the apprenticeship program.

When asked the question why the respondents decided to apply for the apprenticeship program, respondent A, B, C and E got in it for the money. For respondent B it was also because it was less work, and he started out working construction as a kid he watched the electrician work, and he was the one doing the least amount of work at the job site. Respondent C, that came from a low income background, and was part of the earlier generation of journeyman lineman, said that a union job that paid $2.75 an hour was a “deal hog in heaven”, and one of the bigger attractions to the job for him was that if you work more then 12 hours they paid for dinner.

“It was a job that paid really good for the economic background I came from, which was a low income, hand to mouth, never had two nickels to rub together.”

Respondent E was also in the trade for the money, he wanted to make the “big bucks”, but he also wanted to go to the top of the pole, and working for a cable company he didn’t have that opportunity as if he was a lineman. For respondent E it was never enough working for a cable company.

For respondent D, F and G it was a different story to why they became journeyman lineman. Respondent D got in to the trade because his high school sweethearts dad was a Forman and he made it look fun, plus his family had been working for Edison, the utility company here in California for over 30 years.
Respondent F was driving around the streets and saw power line guys working, so he stopped and got a work as a groundman the next week, and he find that he liked the work so he joined the apprenticeship to become a journeyman lineman.

For respondent G working as a groundman and seeing the lineman on the crew made him join the apprenticeship program.

**What has changed in the trade from then to now**

In every trade or career you choose, things will change, sometimes for the better, but sometimes for the worse. One would think that, as we evolve as human and the technology, things would be easier for us but that is not always the case. Even though today, in the journeyman lineman trade, they have more and better equipment then they did back in the day when some of the respondents that participated in this study had when they first started out. It seems that the work is getting more complicated, and the workers have more responsibility then before, which seems to make the work more stressful then it used to be.

When respondent A first started of in the trade 18 years ago, “all I had to do was grab my gear and go to work”, and due to less rules and regulation the work was less stressful. Nowadays because of OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration), all the changes have lead to an increase in stress and paperwork every Forman has to fill out everyday.

The changes the respondent C has seen over the years in the trade is that “back in the day you used to have people that wanted to get things done, but to day it is a lot of politics involved and the workers are more lacy and instead of addressing that issue they try to accommodate the work to the workers, they are making it possible for the inept to get by.”

Respondent E feels that the trade always has been stressful and dangerous, and that it is getting worse and worse, “you have to go by the rules to protect yourself, and the crew.” He feels that it’s more stressful now, but computers have taking away some of the stress, “almost the same, but different.”
Respondent F finds the work out in California can be more stressful then the work he did out in Minnesota, since they were out in the middle of no where, and was doing transmission work that basically is “grunt” work, it was basic and easy. Back when the respondent G first started in the trade it was a different mentality, “it was the greatest generation, it was tuff, but fare, and it was great to be a part of. Now with political correctness, and million other things, the world is a different place, you just cannot do the things we did.” The things that have changed for journeyman lineman from when he first started, is that today the crews do more repetitious work, so the focus on the task is off, which have led to the accident rate going up, while back in the they we had to keep the focus since we were up on the pole the whole time, and today they have bucket trucks for that.

**Stress factors in the trade**

At work we all can experience some level of stress, some more then others, and every trade is different in how stressful it can be. The stress we experience at work, and in life can also something to do with our personalities in how well we perceive the stress, and what we do to handle it. In some trade that are known to be stressful, the management some times will try to step in, in an attempt to make the job less stressful, even though this is not alway possible in all situations.

When asking the participants what the major stress factors was at work it all depended on the position they had in the workplace, and what kind of work they were doing. In earlier studies that have shown, that depending on the position they have in the workplace, will affect the amount of stress the worker will perceive, which you can see when it came to the GF, respondent E, even though he is in charged over more people then the Foreman, respondent A, he still had less stress. What the respondent E found stressful was having to deal with people and since he also did not have the long work hours he also had more time with spending time at home to enjoy his hobbies, which was his way of coping with stress.

Things that bothered respondent E, was people, they make him mad. “The work is just, you cannot control that”, so basically his stress at work comes from anger, and he deals with it
blowing it off, he feel that you cannot take it to heart or take it to personally, because then you are not going to make it.

Respondent E feels that thinking about what could happen if something goes wrong, because you told them to do something, can be stressful, other then that he does not really see his job as stressful.

Respondent A, as a Foreman, he is in charge of four people, and is reliable for everything that happens at the job site. He has to make sure that all the rules and regulations are meet, and on top of that he has to make sure that all the paperwork gets done, which makes his day stressful.

“As a Forman you no longer have your self to look after but a whole crew and you are in charge of their safety and if anything would happen you are the one that goes to jail.”
“As a Forman not only are you in charge over your crew but you also have to get the right equipment, make sure there is materiel, handle the paperwork that needs to be filled out and make sure that you have all the permits that are needed for the job.”

For respondent A, as a Forman, the stress load is more then doubled then that of a crew member, which in turn can lead to some safety issues being overlooked, which lead to relying on the crew members to step up. That is why it is important that the crew works safe, and looks after one and other.

“ As a Forman, your crew members come to you with their problems to relieve some of their stress, which goes both ways.”

Respondent B does not see his work as that stressful, because his Forman takes care of everything that needs to be done to get the work started.

“I still love my work and I do not let the stress get to me.” Even though the respondent B had two serious accidents that almost cost him his life, both times, he do not find it stressful, the only thing that changed is he don not trust the crew members as he did before (when it comes to underground work and safety), “you have to trust and rely more on each other to make sure you get the right tool handed to you and that they are there to help you if anything goes wrong.”
When it comes to safety respondent B, do not trust, or rely on his crew members to have his back or hand him the right equipment anymore, which makes him work safer then before, and he takes his time and always double checks the work, and the equipment.

When respondent C first started out in the trade as a journeyman lineman in 1972 he did not find the work being to stressful or having an affect on his family life, since all there was too it was to go out and do your job good, and the minute he left the yard he quit caring about work. For respondent C now, what he finds stressful with the job today is all the paperwork he has to do, just to cover his “butt”, and with everything being switched over to computers it generates ten times more paperwork ten times faster, but he do not find his work causing him stress since he is a retiree, and do not really need to work. He more or less does it for fun, and the minute it stops being fun he can just walk away from it all.

Respondent C was in the army and served in the WWII, and he said that after being in the army, and the level of high stress they put you threw makes everything els like “water on a ducks back. When you get out from the army, you are just so happy that you are still vertical, and still breathing, which makes everything else just fine.”

The respondent D finds the job very stressful, in the regards of what could happen if something went wrong, and what to do if something bad happen and he would survive. For him it was stressful to learn the trade, and to get to work is stressful due to the traffic. He finds it getting more stressful the higher he gets in the trade since it is more stress involved. The current crew he is on is good, and they know what they are doing with makes it less stressful.

Respondent F finds it to be a stressful job, that comes with responsibilities, “depending what you do is how safe you feel.”

The respondent F feels that it is more stress right now because of the area they are working in, “you screw up, it is big power losses in big buildings”, and this will cost money for the utility company.
The respondent G feels that nowadays, the work has a higher stress level, then it did before. The work has gotten easier, they are not as physical, “but you have people watching you, more people in charge that really do not know the craft or what we do.” That creates a stressful situation since you always have to explain who you are and what you do, plus you have ten times the amount of paperwork now to do.

When the respondent G was working as a lineman he told me that, when it came to stress or being scared, or relying on other crew members, “you did not do it, because that would be a sign of weakness, you had to hold it in and hide it. You always had to be “macho”, and you still do in this trade.

Stress and family life

Stress will affect us and our family different. Some people are able not to bring home the stress from work, while some do, which can lead to a normally stress free home environment becomes stressful, which can have a major affect on the family life. Studies has shown that without a good support system at home, or at work the stress will have an impact on your home and work environment.

When asked how the stress affected the family life, respondent A said that the affect stress has on the family life is “you come home from work moody”, and the long hours also had an affect on the family life, but he tried to make up for it when he was home and had time off from work.

For respondent B, he said that he did not let it have any affect due to the fact he never really felt stress, and if he did, he did not let it get to him. For respondent C it was pretty much the same, since he did not let the stress have any impact on his home life, since the minute he left work anything that was work related was left there.

For respondent D, it was pretty much the same as for respondent A, where some times he brought the stress home, but then he talks about it “until it gets to a point were it is like let it go, move on, you are at home, let it be home.”
Respondent D feel that the long hours can “mess up things at home sometimes”, but he tries to set up a goal that they can work toward together, and then do it, take some time off and have some fun. Due to the long hours, respondent D feels the work can drag him down a bit, and he feels that he is not getting enough “me time”, and having a life. Stress used to have a big affect on his home life, “I used to be more of a high stress person”, he still feel that way, but he do not feel that he have that much of stress at work anymore. He thinks it is important to have something outside the job that can take the mind of work, a hobby or what not.

Respondent E said that since he do not work the long hours as a GF that the journeyman lineman does anymore, it did not have any affect on his home life. When it comes to his work interfering with his home life, he tries to keep work and stress away from his home, and he has a lot of hobbies that helps him cope with the stress from work, and maybe once every two months he copes with it by talking to his wife about it, but it has to be something that really is stressing him out for him to do that, but in the other hand the wife id, she comes home every day and “bitch and whine” about her work.

The respondent F tries not to bring the stress home with him, but he has stressful days when he feels that he probably brings it home “a little bit, but not in an anger sense”, it just wears him out physically and mentally, so he gets tired. Like the respondent A and D, he felt that the long hours had an affect on his home life but he tries to make up for it, as well, when he had some time off.

Respondent Gs family life got affected too, both by the long hours and the way he was coping with the stress with alcohol, that led to his two divorces.

**Coping with the stress**

We all cope with stress and the stressors at work and at home in different ways. For the people that has a strong and healthy family support or support system copes with the stress by relying and talking to their family or friends. It has also shown that it is common for people with a poor support system to turn to substance abuse as a coping mechanism. Having a
hobby and/or a pet can also help with coping, since it can help taking the mind of the stress with focusing on something that is not work or stress related.

When asking the respondents how they cope with the stressors at work they all had different ways of dealing with the stress.

Respondent A, when asked how he copes with the stress said that he then talks to his wife and tries to let go of things that happen during the work day. In his early years, he had turned to drugs and alcohol to take the edge off, but nowadays he does work around the house, which is not often due to long working hours since he approximately is working 7 days a week. For respondent B, that did not feel much stress from work, but when he did, he did not feel that it had any affect on his family life, since he coped with the stress by spending a few hours in the garage with his dog to take the edge off before he would go and see his wife.

Respondent C had the same mentality, about not finding his job stressful, as respondent B did. When asked if he ever turned to substance abuse as a coping mechanism he said no, but he did drink since he likes to “party hard”. The drinking had gotten him in trouble regarding the driving, it was never work related though. Respondent C did inform me that substance abuse is common in the trade for coping with the stress. When he first started out in the trade, drinking was common among the workers that were scared and stressed out of the work, and they drank to cope with their fears, since the money was so good they could not see themselves doing something els as an option. Today the only difference is that there is more drugs involved, it is not only alcohol any more.

Respondent D copes with stress by talking to his boss at work, and he tries to explain things, in hope to make the stressors easier to cope with. Turning to his boss for help coping helped him some. Respondent D feels that he need to be good at everything, even though it scares him, and with this being such a “macho” trade, he did not want to show signs of weakness, and in turn this lead to him standing on the sideline, and watch the other crew members do the work. He has turned to drugs to cope with the stress from work, he didn’t feel that it helped, “it numbs it at the time”, but in the end it just made him feel bad, he still does it though from time to time.
Respondent E turns to his hobbies for help in coping with the stress from work. If there were something that really stressed him out, he would talk to his wife about it to help him cope, he did inform me that it “maybe” only happen once or twice a month that he had to talk to his wife to help him cope.

“Even though I maybe only talk to my wife once or twice a month to help me cope, she comes home every day and bitch and whine about her work.”

Respondent F feels that the crew he is on now can have times were it is high stress, and he copes with it by getting mad and yell, but he feels that most of the times it is “easy and free flowing.”

Respondent F also use sleeping, surfing, fishing, and hunting as a way of coping. At work he tries to share the stress burden with his boss so his boss is not completely stressed out. The crew members only have the work to worry about, while the Forman has the work and the management side to worry about, “and a Forman takes on a lot more stress the crew members do, and on top of that the Forman is liable for anything that happens out at the job site.”

Respondent G said that when he first started out in the trade he use too bring home the stress from work, and the way he coped with it was drinking, which in turn affected his home life.

“To cope at work with the stress, I blow up in peoples faces, I yell and scream, but then I am over it.”

Since he now quit drinking respondent G tries to cope with the stress right away, instead of bringing it home with him, or wait until it got worse.

**Drugs, alcohol and infidelity/divorce**

Sometimes people will turn to substance abuse to cope with stress or what not in their life. Infidelity can also be a way to get away from reality just for a while. Turning to drugs or infidelity can lead to divorce, since it can put a strain on the family/home life.
When asked if any of the respondents had turned to drugs, alcohol or infidelity to cope with the stress from the work, the answers was somewhat alike for some of respondents, and different for the others.

Respondent A said that in his early years, he had turned to drugs and alcohol to take the edge off. Infidelity was also something he had turned to get away from it all since he did not have a great support system at home. Now he is remarried, and has a great support system so instead of turning to drugs and alcohol to take the edge off, he now goes home and talks to his wife.

Respondent B did not have much to say in regards to this question, he been happily married for over thirty years, and for him, turning to drugs, or alcohol has never been a question.

The respondent C had been married, but he has been divorced for over 25 years and the reason for the divorce was not work related, they just grew apart, and they did not have any thing in common. Since he also did not find his work stressful, like respondent B, there was never a need to turn to substance abuse as a coping mechanism.

For respondent D things were a little different, since he felt that it was not only the job that brought on the stress, but also the drive to work. Also being in and out of relationships did not give him the best support system at home, so he had turned to drugs to cope with the stress, but he did not feel that it helped, “it numbs it at the time”, but in the end it just made him feel bad, he still turns to drugs from time to time. When the stress is really bad he said that he just wanted to drink and “hit it hard.”

Respondent E told me that he never turned to drugs and alcohol to cope with stress, he smoked pot and tried cocaine, but that was years ago. He did feel that he drinks more now, then before, when he was a Foreman, but that is only because “I got time now to drink”, he did not feel that his drinking had any affect on his family. He do not feel that there is as much drugs and alcohol problems in the trade today, as it was when he first started out, “when people would have beer in their coolers and show up to work drunk”, but he thinks that the divorce rate is the same as back then.
Respondent F feels that the long hours have a strain on his marriage. “The one thing this trade is known for is alcoholism and divorces, you have to try to balance it the best way you can because there is a job that need to be done. At the same time, no job is worth your livelihood.” He feels that, when it gets to a point when sacrificing the relationship, or his life, it is time to take a brake from it all and relax. When asked if the respondent F ever turn to drugs or alcohol to cope with stress he said he never done drugs, but he could not say if he ever turned to alcohol to cope, but he drinks regularly. “I am a firm believer that if you drink because you are angry, it is only going to make it worse. I try to be in a better mood before having drinks with friends, otherwise it only will escalate the negativity.” The respondent think it is quite a bit of substance abuse in the trade, but he do not notice it since he do not surround himself with people that do drugs. “With 8-9 crews in the yard, 6-7 guys are doing drugs on a regular basis, that is a lot for me. I never knew that many people that did drugs before I got in to the trade.” He do not know if he can contribute divorces to the trade, as much on their lifestyle.

When respondent G first started out in the trade, it was more drinking then drugs, they were still tied to the WWII guys, and “they hated drugs, long hair, and the whole hippie thing.” The guys that were 5-10 years younger then the respondent were the ones that was more in to “smoking dope” then drinking.” Respondent G have had two divorces, it was both work and alcohol related, and to work in this trade you have to “love it, otherwise you are not going to last, and you will hate your life.”

The affect stress has on the health

Research has shown that stress can have a harmful affect on the health. Stress has been linked to coronary heart disease, hypertension and peptic ulcers, etc.

When asked if stress had any affect on the respondents health, they all felt somewhat they had been affected by it.
Respondent A has suffered from high blood pressure from the stress at work, but back then he also had a very stressful home environment that added to the stress. Now he is remarried and he has a healthy support system at home, so when he gets of work he can relax, which has lead to his blood pressure been loward.

Respondent B did not feel stress from work, but even without the stress, this job affect your body, and health, since it is such a hard work, and it wears you out.

The respondent C was working with a lineman that had been in the trade for 20 years, that had an ulcer the size of a grapefruit from the fear he had from the job, and to cope with it he also was a heavy drinker, he was in the trade for the money.

For respondent D the stress has had an impact on his life, when it was really bad the stress would eat up his stomach, and then he just wanted to drink and “hit it hard.”

Respondent E did not think that the stress had any affect on the health. “Hard work, and some stress is good for the body, you sweet it out and you work harder, you get to be in better shape.”

The respondent F feels the stress is affecting his health, with the lack of sleep, long hours, that also affected his eating habits, in the sense that he cannot eat regularly, and makes poor food choice when they are eating on the go.

When asked how the job stress affected respondent Gs health, he said that he have high blood pressure, and have had it for years, and his body is pretty beat up, but since he quit drinking 11 month ago, it has taking 15 years of his life. A year ago he could not walk 100 feet without sitting down because of his spinel stenosis, and bad knees.
Would you change anything with the line of work if you could do it all over again

Working in a trade that is so high in stress, and with little to do to change the stress in the job, one would think that most people would want to change the trade that they are in to reduce the stress in their life and to avoid the affect the stress can have on the health.

When asked the question if the respondents would change anything about their career choice, they all had the same answer.

Respondent A would not change anything with the line of work he is in, even with the long hours, the hard work, and how stressful it can be, he is proud of his trade and he loves his job.

(Respondent B)”This type of work wears you out, makes you old before your time, it is not easy work, but it is fun, it is rewarding, I would not do anything different. I could not sit in a cubicle and not have the outside”.

When asked if the respondent C would change anything about his career choice if he could do it all over, he said no, and he thinks this is a really fun job. If you are going to do work and be in general-construction, this trade is the best one you can be in, “I don’t think I would have liked doing anything else.”

When asked if respondent D would change anything about his career choice, he said that he can see himself working in the trade it until retirement, but he also would like to do something else like start a business and do the line work on the side.

For respondent E, the only thing he would change about his career choice, was that he would have wanted to get into the trade earlier then he did, other then that he loves what he is doing and do not want to change it.

When asked if respondent F would change anything with his career choice, he said no, he likes what he is doing but he does not want to do it for the rest of his life. He would like to go back to school and get a business degree of some kind, so he can get into the other side of
the trade, the manager side. The respondent would love to go back to ranching, but there is no money in it.

“If you want to make a living, do not be a rancher.”

When asked if respondent G would change anything about his career choice, he said that he rather do this then anything else, the only thing he would have change would be the drinking part.

“It is a good trade and it is ours, and we do not get the respect we should in this trade because people do not know about what is going on. In their view, we are a bunch of pill popping drunks, that cheats. As a lawyer, or a doctor, you work long ours too, but you have a different statues, even though you make the same amount of money.”

Respondent G is proud of his trade, but feels that people do not give the trade enough recognition.
5. Discussion and implications

The aim for this study was to see how seven journeyman lineman, or former JL, from the same work environment handled and coped with the stress in their work field, and at home. The main questions for this study were, what are the major stress factors at work, how did the stress from work affect the family life, and how did they cope with the stress. The results from this study showed that stress affects people differently, depending on what their work description is. Most of the participants had different factors at work that they perceived as stressful. Depending on the family or the social support system they had, would affect how they coped with the stress, and how it affected their home life.

Work stress and health

Most of the interviewed in the study, associated work stress with frustration, worry, emotional exhaustion, distress and tension, which is how Wickramsinghes (2010) is describing employee’s feelings associated with difficult working conditions in her article. When asking the participants what the major stress factors were at work, it all depended on the position they had in the workplace, and what kind of work they were doing. For one of the participants, that was at a higher level said that making critical decision and not knowing if something would go wrong by the decision he made, was stressful. On the other hand he did experience less stress then the participant that was in charge of four men, that both Limm et al. (2010) and Vagg et al. (2002) brings up in their articles about how a better work position can led to less stress, but in the making of a critical decision, and dealing with crisis would bring on more stress then the workers at a lower level would experience. In this case the participant that was a Forman, did experience more stress then his workers since he tried to remove as much stress as possible from his workers so they would work safer.

It has been shown that stressors can lead to a negative result on most bodily systems, and it can be producing longer lasting effects, which can lead to severe chronic, or even acute physical health problems (Burges et al., 2010). Russell and Roach (2002) have seen evidence about the harmful affects of psychological stress in the work place, which can be linked to
coronary heart disease, hypertension, peptic ulcer. For the majority of the interviewed in the study, had experienced some of the side affects from stress in their health. They were dealing with high blood pressure, stomach problems, lack of sleep and bad eating habits. Some of the participants that had been around for a longer time had seen people getting ulcers, and aging prematurely due to the stress.

Coping

When it came to coping with the stress from work, a few of the participants in this study had turned to substance abuse in the past, and some that still did, in an attempt to get away from it all, to feel numb. Previous studies have shown that some individuals will turn to substance abuse to stun their emotions, it is also an attempt to get away from the stress, get numb, or to sleep (www.stresspages.com, 2011). Other ways for people to cope can be that they seek social support, instrumental support, planning, and/or tries to increase the effort in an attempt to alter the source of the stressor (Wickramasinghe, 2010), which some participants did. They would rely on their family support by talking, planning trips with their spouses, or getting stress release from a hobby. In the past 30 years, research has emerged that are demonstrating the beneficial affects of social support on individuals healthy and unhealthy areas. It is also suggested, that when individuals feel supported they use a bigger variety of coping strategies (DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005).

One of the participants did talk to his boss in an attempt to help with the stress, but he did have a hard time to tell the boss the main reason for his stress, in fear of looking weak in front of his boss, which is something Chrisopoulos et al. (2010) talks about in their article, that some times in the more manly, and “hard core” trades, where the workers are expected to be more “masculine”, tend to not seek emotional support in the fear that it might reflect as a weakness in their character. This might be one of the reason this respondent some times then turns to drugs in an attempt to cope.

For the two participants that did not find their work stressful, in the study, it could be possibly that they have been able to thrive, and maintain their enthusiasm despite the stress in the
work environment. It has been argued that coping is a transaction between the person and the event, and that coping changes over time (Burgess et al., 2010).

**Stress and family life**

Holmes (2001) and Lourel et al. (2009) showed in their studies that a negative balance between work/family, and family/work, can create a vicious cycle where the interpersonal relation can be impaired by the individual, and irritability can reduce the availability for social support, which can be hard to escape. The control over work time is also related to work family balance and satisfaction. Majority of the participants in the study, felt that the stress from work and the long hours had some affect on their family life.

For one of the participants that coped with the stress from work with alcohol, instead of relying on his family support had ended up with two failed marriages. When bringing the stress home from work, Cheung and Tangs (2009) study showed that not having a proper, or being able to rely on a support system, can lead to high family stress and conflicts.

In Lourel et al. (2009) article it showed that family stressors and support are related to work satisfaction, and that work stressors and support is related to satisfaction at home. WHI is also connected to role overload in the home, and the intention to end a marriage or a romantic relationship. Most of the participants that had been married more than once, or been in multiple relationships, ended their marriages or relationships, due to lack of family support, or high stress from home, that ended up interfering with their work.

**Implication**

When masking a problem with alcohol or drugs, all you do is numb it for the moment, so it is still there when you come back. All it does is add to the problem, which then can lead to broken family relation, getting fired from work, etc. I found it interesting that the same line of work with a high level of stress can have such a different affect on individuals. It shows that in any line of work, if your Forman, or boss is knowledgeable in their field it helps their worker handle and cope with stress, it even can make it less stressful for them. I did find it
disturbing that so many turn to substance abuse instead of trying to seek professional help, or trying to find a good support system among family or friends. When it comes to health issues, you can try to eat healthier and exercise, however, in that line of work it can be hard to find time for that due to long working hours and when you are always on they go like they are, it can be hard to eat on regular basis, and eat healthy. The facts are, it is a hard trade that wears the body out, even though you do everything to be safe, accidents can happen. The high divorce rate is inevitable, not everyone is cut out to marry in to the trade and all that comes with it. Sure, as a journeyman lineman you make a good living, which can appeal to everyone, but due to long hours, and travel, few last as a spouse to a journeyman lineman.

Netterstrøm and Bech (2010) study about stress treatment programs, has shown a significant affect on the return to work rate, but treatment is often handled by the general practitioners, and they are often not capable of dealing with work related stress symptoms. Not much are being done about handling this issue, so until there is a better why to go about reducing the stress, and to learn how to cope with it in a healthy way, most people have to rely on their family and social support.

5.1 Limitation and future research

With conducting these seven interviews you cannot really generalize from this study how big of a problem the stress is, the affect it has, how people cope, and if the stress affect the social life in the power line trade. Also, since the participants all are living and working in California, which is a state that have more rules and regulations in the trade then other states do, the stressful problems here might not be the same in an other states. With conducting a bigger study, with more people all over the country you would get a better understanding and better generalizable. With more research, since none really has been done in this trade, it might help working on issues that is proven to cause more stress.

5.2 Conclusion

While conducting the interviews I wanted to know why the respondents chose this line of work, if it was somewhat a family trade, or a different reason to their choose.
Depending on what you do for work will have an impact on how stressful the workplace will be. Since this trade is so hard and stressful, many journeyman lineman turn to substance abuse. Whether it be drugs, alcohol or prescription drugs to take the edge off, or dull the pain from accidents or just from being worn out. This trade not only prematurely ages you, but it also has a high divorce rate due to the fact of the long hours, travel, and infidelity while traveling. It is a hard trade to marry into and you have to get used to spending time away from your spouse. Knowing a fatal accident can happen at anytime, can add stress to the spouses life also. However, studies has shown that personality, and how you perceive stress plays a big part in how affected you are to stress, and how well you can cope.

The study that I did on journeyman lineman shows that the management in the workplace do not do enough to prevent a stressful environment, but it might also have something to do with the fact that the trade has the persona of being a “macho” line of work, where you do not show your weakness, which I got from some of the participants. The study also showed me that if you have a strong support system at home, or at work the coping with stress will be easier, which leads to a less affect stress will have on your physical and mental health. By eating right and exercising you will help your body dealing with the stress better then if you have unhealthy habits. The individuals that turn to substance abuse to cope with the stress just add more problems to the situation, which you can see with what is going on in their personal life.

This research is shining some light on to a trade, who's appreciation from others is low, and they are often taken for granted when they are out there risking their life in a high stress environment, only so everyone els can be comfortable.
References


