PHI 800-12 Transformative Learning and Adult Education

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Professor

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Assignment

Assignment #2 – Developmental Readings

1. Create Developmental Readings from seminal sources and scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles. Review the instructions for Assignment #3, the course essential elements, and course readings to identify selections of books and journals to create entries.

a. Refer to the "Student Guide to Developmental Readings" in the General Helps folder for updated information on sample comments, the grading rubric, and key definitions related to developmental readings.

**Source One:** Velazquez, E., & Hernandez, M. (2019). Effects of police officer exposure to traumatic experiences and recognizing the stigma associated with police officer mental health. *Policing: An International Journal*, *42*(4), 711–724. https://doi.org/10.1108/pijpsm-09-2018-0147

**Comment 1:** Barriers that prevent police officers from seeking treatment

**Comment 2:** Cumulative trauma may insinuate the creation of a “tougher officer,”

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Working as a first responder has been identified as one of the few occupations where individuals are repeatedly placed in high-stress and high-risk situations. Specifically, police officers encounter dangerous situations and risk their lives as a component of their jobs. Officers who experience elevated levels of stress have an increased risk of mental health consequences, particularly depression, anxiety, burnout, somatization, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Velazquez & Hernandez, 2019).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with not only the dangers of policing but also the mental health issues that manifest as a result of being a police officer.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This is an additive to mental health in policing. Law enforcement is entrenched in providing a high-stress environment for sworn personnel. Police stress originates from organizational and environmental aspects. These types of stressors expose officers to trauma in ways the general population may find difficult to understand. For example, police officers witness violence, death, and victims of crime daily. Officers who often encounter or witness violent acts are more at risk of developing a trauma-related mental health disorder compared to the general population (Velazquez & Hernandez, 2019).

**Contextualization:**  In recent years, incidents and reports have highlighted the importance of considering the mental health of police officers. The daily exposure to trauma and the constant risk of death can significantly impact their emotional well-being and coping mechanisms. As a new police officer, I was driven to make a meaningful impact within my community and department. While my motivation remains strong, my idealistic view of saving the world has shifted due to the numerous traumatic events I have witnessed throughout my career.

**Source Two:** Sørensen, L. N., Olesen, K. H., Midtgaard, C. D., & Willert, M. V. (2022). Risk of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Following Major Disasters and Critical Incidents in Police Officers — a Systematic Review. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, *37*(4). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-022-09547-1

**Comment 3:** The effects of the delayed response to PTSD

**Comment 4**: Gain an understanding of the risk chronic psychological risk factors

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a delayed or protracted response to exceptionally threatening or catastrophic events (Sørensen et al., 2022). On-duty, traumatic events for police officers can be grouped into five categories: personal life threat, duty-related violence, encountering physical or sexual assault victims, exposure to civilian death, and a heterogeneous group of other events (Sørensen et al., 2022).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the daily, weekly, and monthly calls for service that police encounter and how it affects their mental health.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This is additive to the discussion. PTSD may take more than six months to develop fully, and the proportion of such delayed-onset PTSD has been reported as 24.5% of PTSD cases in a systematic review. Also, delayed-onset PTSD was almost twice as high among occupational groups compared to civilian victims (Sørensen et al., 2022).

**Contextualization:** As law enforcement officers, we frequently encounter traumatic and high-pressure situations that place us at risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is a mental health condition that can arise following exposure to or witnessing a traumatic event. Symptoms include intrusive memories, flashbacks, nightmares, avoidance of triggers, hyperarousal, and negative changes in mood and cognition. It is critical to acknowledge and address the impact of PTSD on police officers. Left untreated, PTSD can have serious consequences not only for us but also for our families and the communities we serve. PTSD is indiscriminate in its effects, impacting an officer's overall well-being, job performance, relationships, and quality of life. It can also contribute to other mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts.

**Source Three:** Petrie, K., Spittal, M., Zeritis, S., Phillips, M., Deady, M., Forbes, D., Bryant, R., Shand, F., & Harvey, S. B. (2022). Suicide among emergency service workers: a retrospective mortality study of national coronial data, 2001–2017. *Psychological Medicine*, *53*(12), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0033291722002653

**Comment 5:** Hidden burden for emergency service workers, ESW

**Comment 6:** Exposure to traumatic incidents may confer an increased risk for suicidal behaviors

**Comment 7:** The majority of suicides occurred among males aged 30–49 years

**Quote/Paraphrase:** The mental health burden of emergency service work, together with a traditionally male-dominated workforce and their access to lethal means as part of their role (i.e., firearms, pharmaceuticals), has generated a widely-held assumption that ESW is at increased risk of suicide. This comment suggests that due to the stress associated with emergency service workers, the risk of suicide is higher than in the average population (Petrie et al., 2022).

**Essential Element: Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment contradicts the discussion. Our finding that emergency service work was not associated with an increased risk of suicide compared to other occupations (Petrie et al., 2022).

**Contextualization:** The results of this study were surprising to me, as I have unfortunately lost several colleagues in law enforcement to suicide, including one just last month. Unfortunately, there is a stigma surrounding mental health within law enforcement that can deter officers from seeking help. Some officers may feel that asking for assistance with mental health issues is a sign of weakness or that it could harm their career. This stigma can exacerbate existing mental health struggles and prevent officers from accessing the support they need. However, efforts are underway to address this issue. My department has implemented mental health programs and initiatives to reduce stigma, raise awareness, and support our officers. These programs provide access to counseling services, peer support networks, and critical incident stress management. We also offer wellness programs emphasizing self-care, stress management, and work-life balance.

**Source Four**: Agrawal, M., & Singh, R. (2020). Factors Associated with Police Depression: A Systematic Review. *Zenodo*, *15*(1). https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3819100

**Comment 8:** Police stress is strongly and significantly related to depression

**Comment 9:** The pressure to maintain a solid and stoic image has contributed to the development of depression

**Quote/Paraphrase:** The police population experiences considerable job-related stressors, making them vulnerable to depression. Among the mental health concerns experienced by police officers, depression is a global health concern. Police stress is strongly and significantly related to depression (Agrawal & Singh, 2020).

**Essential Element:** Depression is one of the chief risk factors for substance abuse, suicide, and poor life quality in the police.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This is additive to the discussion. Depression does not strike in isolation. It is known to have far-reaching negative consequences on the health and well-being of an otherwise physically fit person. Police officers experience traumatic and life-threatening incidents, putting them at risk of mental health disturbances. Police officers involved in rescue work had much higher depression levels as compared to the unexposed group (Agrawal & Singh, 2020).

**Contextualization:** Depression among police officers is a significant issue that often goes overlooked, with severe consequences for both the officers and the communities they serve. The demanding nature of police work, exposure to traumatic events, and pressure to maintain a stoic image have contributed to the development of depression among myself and my colleagues over the years. Chronic job-related stress is one of the main factors that contribute to depression, as we face high levels of stress daily, dealing with dangerous situations, witnessing violence, and working long hours. This constant exposure to stress can lead to the development of depression over time.

**Source Five:** Lee, N., & Wu, Y.-K. (2024). Work-Related Stress and Psychological Distress among Law Enforcement Officers: The Carolina Blue Project. *Healthcare*, *12*(6), 688–688. https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare12060688

**Comment 10:** Law enforcement is an inherently stressful occupation that places significant emotional and psychological demands on those in this role.

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Law enforcement officers (LEOs) are inevitably exposed to diverse traumatic and stressful situations, including engaging in shooting incidents, investigating crime scenes with deceased individuals, and dealing with traffic fatalities, child abuse/neglect, or exposure to illicit drugs. Constant exposure to violence, trauma, and crises could lead to work-related stress and psychological distress, such as burnout, chronic stress, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other mental health disorders (Lee & Wu, 2024).

**Essential Element:** Addressing work-related stress and psychological distress among LEOs is imperative to preventing and ensuring the well-being of those upholding public safety and health.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This is an additive of the discussion. The study investigated various factors such as race, geographical location, and exposure to toxic materials to determine the severity of burnout, operational police stress, depression, anxiety, stress, and PTSD symptoms experienced by LEOs. We also measured and included the comparisons of work-related stress and psychological distress based on sex, education, job category, and whether they served in leadership positions, were required to perform rotation shifts, or were required to perform patrol duties. Examining these variables helped identify potential disparities and unique stressors associated with different socio-demographic and work-related variables (Lee & Wu, 2024).

**Contextualization:** Police officers frequently encounter distinct difficulties when seeking assistance for mental health concerns. The culture within law enforcement historically prioritizes resilience and independence, which may dissuade officers, particularly those who are new to the force, from seeking help or disclosing their struggles with mental health. This can generate a sense of apprehension regarding potential stigmatization or being viewed as vulnerable by colleagues and superiors, which can heighten feelings of seclusion and intensify symptoms of depression.

The effects of untreated depression on police officers can be severe and far-reaching. Depression can hinder an officer's ability to make sound decisions, react quickly in high-pressure situations, and maintain positive relationships with colleagues and loved ones. In addition, it can increase the risk of substance abuse and suicide, with studies showing that police officers are more likely to take their own lives than the general population.

To effectively address depression in police officers, a multi-faceted approach is necessary. Prioritizing a supportive and empathetic work environment that encourages officers to seek help without fear of judgment or negative consequences is paramount. Police departments should implement mental health programs, provide access to confidential counseling services, and offer training to help officers recognize signs of depression in themselves and their colleagues. The effects of untreated depression on police officers can be severe and far-reaching. Depression can hinder an officer's ability to make sound decisions, react quickly in high-pressure situations, and maintain positive relationships with colleagues and loved ones. In addition, it can increase the risk of substance abuse and suicide, with studies showing that police officers are more likely to take their own lives than the general population.

A multifaceted approach is necessary to effectively address depression in police officers. It is paramount to prioritize a supportive and empathetic work environment that encourages officers to seek help without fear of judgment or negative consequences. Police departments should implement mental health programs, provide access to confidential counseling services, and offer training to help officers recognize signs of depression in themselves and their colleagues.

**Source Six:** Violanti, J. M. (2021). *Occupation under siege: Resolving mental health crises in police work*. Charles C Thomas, Publisher, Ltd.

**Comment 11:** Understanding the mental health crises in police work

**Comment 12:** Resolvimg the mental health crises in police work

**Quote/Paraphrase:** In our time, the police are under siege in American society. The consequences are far-reaching regarding the mental and physical health of the men and women who work in the profession (Violanti, 2021).

**Essential Element:** This book discusses work, social, and biological aspects associated with increased risk for outcomes of police mental strain, protective factors associated with the amelioration of stress, and strategies for prevention.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This is an additive of the discussion. Because of the aftereffects of civil unrest, riots, negative societal attributions, and the COVID-19 pandemic, the police are under tremendous psychological pressure in present-day America. The strain brought about by these situations weighs heavily on the mental well-being of police officers (Violanti, 2021).

**Contextualization:** Being a police officer has come with significant psychological pressure and challenges. These pressures have had a profound impact on my mental health and well-being. High levels of stress police work that I have been involved in with my team is inherently stressful, with us facing unpredictable and often dangerous situations daily. Our exposure to traumatic events leads to psychological distress, including post-traumatic stress disorder. Police officers are often faced with challenging and emotionally charged situations that can take a toll on their mental health. The pressure to remain composed and in control of their emotions creates a significant burden, and prolonged stress can lead to physical and mental health problems if not properly managed. It is essential to recognize these psychological pressures and take steps to support the mental well-being of officers.

Comprehensive mental health support, stress reduction programs, and a healthy work-life balance are all crucial in promoting mental wellness among police officers. A supportive organizational culture that encourages open communication and seeks to destigmatize seeking help for mental health concerns is also vital. Regular mental health check-ins and confidential counseling services can help officers navigate the psychological pressures of their profession. By prioritizing mental health, we can better support those who work tirelessly to keep our communities safe.

**Source Seven:** Johnson, O., Papazoglou, K., Violanti, J. M., & Pascarella, J. (2022). *Practical considerations for preventing police suicide: stop officer suicide*. Springer.

**Comment 13:** Understanding the mental health crises in police work

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Being Male increases one's risk for complete suicide. However, other factors increase one's risk of suicide, including occupation. Policing is and has always been a male-dominated profession, more specifically, a white male-dominated profession. White males, including those working as police officers, seemingly never "age out" of their risk for suicide (Johnson et al., 2022).

**Essential Element:** Suicide is a leading cause of death among all ages, with males being four times more likely than females to die by suicide. However, understanding the role of suicide in this occupational group is not cut and dry (Johnson et al., 2022).

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This is a variant of the discussion. Suicide is a very complicated and dynamic phenomenon and cannot, in most cases, be explained by a single reason or factor. The belief that suicide can be explained so simplistically, unfortunately, may also contribute to the growing inability to slow or reduce these deaths (Johnson et al., 2022). The policing profession has consistently been recognized for maintaining law and order, keeping the peace, and protecting the public. Typically, sought-after traits for a police officer included having a type "A" personality, being authoritative, making quick life-or-death decisions, and being stoic and fearless. Being male and exceeding in physical fitness were desirable qualities for success as a police officer. The criteria for becoming a police officer were sparse, and higher education qualities were not mandatory.

Fast forward, and although the policing profession is based on the same foundation as hundreds of years ago, the role of a police officer has dramatically changed (Johnson et al., 2022).

As society has evolved, the expectations of a police officer have increased, and police organizations are starting to re-evaluate how they select and screen potential recruits. In addition to being physically fit, police officers are expected to fulfill many roles, including dealing with people in crisis, de-escalating volatile situations, regulating emotions, and staying calm under pressure. They are also expected to work in high-stress situations, deal with people at their worst, and respond to trauma-related calls. The type of work faced by police officers includes a significant amount of operational, organizational, and personal stressors that, if not kept in check, can lead to a variety of mental health issues (Johnson et al., 2022).

**Contextualization:** The issue of suicide among police officers deserves significant attention and understanding. The nature of police work is demanding, stressful, and emotionally challenging, which can result in a higher risk of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The cumulative impact of these factors can lead to increased rates of suicide among police officers, as research has shown that they have a higher likelihood of dying by suicide compared to the general population and in the line of duty.

# References

Agrawal, M., & Singh, R. (2020). Factors Associated with Police Depression: A Systematic Review. *Zenodo*, *15*(1). https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3819100

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