

Olivia Johnson ·

Konstantinos Papazoglou ·

John Violanti · Joseph Pascarella *Editors*

Practical Considerations for Preventing Police Suicide

Stop Officer Suicide



Springer

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Olivia Johnson • Konstantinos Papazoglou
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Dedicated to my late father Carl who always believed in my dreams. He was my biggest fan and supporter. To all the men and women who bravely serve us each and every day, we thank you for your sacrifices. They do not go unnoticed.

Dr. Olivia Johnson

Dedicated to the memory of my grandparents who instilled in me the values of knowledge and altruism for creating a better world. May God rest them in peace.

Dr. Konstantinos Papazoglou

To the men and women in blue—stay with it. Hope is a good thing.

Dr. John Violanti

“To those that have struggled, I am hopeful that one day Peace is found”

Dr. Joseph Pascarella

Foreword

Over 47,000 people in the United States died by suicide in 2019 making it the 10th leading cause of death. In addition to other risks, such as psychiatric and life problems, occupation is a factor in suicide. It has been noted that the risk of suicide is greater among unemployed and unskilled work population, but suicide is also prevalent in professional occupations. One such occupation is law enforcement. In today's societal and politically charged environment, law enforcement is severely strained in fulfilling the requirements of policing. Negative public scrutiny, exposure to trauma, violence and mass murders, riots, unappreciated risks, pandemics, sometimes risking their lives—coupled with any personal problems in living—all add up to an intolerable stress. A sense of isolation, coupled with frustration, pent-up aggression, and eventual depression ensues.

Research has told us that the mental health of law enforcement officers is in jeopardy. Jetelina et al. (2020), for example, found that 12% of officers reported a mental health diagnosis, and 26% reported current symptoms of mental illness. Officers reported that they would be unlikely to seek mental health care because of lack of confidentiality, stigma, loss of job, and mistrust of mental health care professionals who do not understand police work. Many officers are unable to move away from police work, even when they are off-duty. The effects of work linger on at times when they should be enjoying other things in their lives.

It is interesting that an occupation that has healthy and well-adjusted persons enter into its ranks would have an increased risk of suicide. Perhaps the problem lies not in the person but in the system. There appears to be a hesitancy of officers who are in distress to come forward and ask for help because of the stigma associated with doing so. Stigma is one of the most frequently identified barriers to mental health care and is substantial among the police. Officers may feel that if they admit mental health problems and seek help, they will be less trusted by peers and supervisors to do their job and may lose opportunities for promotions. There is a need for more education for police concerning mental health and effective treatment.

Because law enforcement officers are a close-knit group, there is risk for a suicide contagion. Group cohesiveness may lead to close social integration and transmission among peers and acceptance of suicide as a solution. Thomas Joiner (2003)

terms this “assortative relating,” individuals who possess similar qualities or problems, including suicide risk factors, may be vulnerable to suicide as a group.

The means for suicide are readily available to law enforcement officers. Firearms are an essential tool of trade, and officers know how to use them effectively. The burning question among police organizations is whether or not firearms should be removed from officers who are suffering from mental anguish or have suicidal thoughts. There are two sides to this controversy; one firearms should be removed to ensure the safety of the officer, or two, they should not be removed because this would only worsen the mental distress of the officer, given that firearms have a symbolic meaning of police identity. Both sides have credence and leave a difficult decision for police administrators.

We know little of the personal and life circumstances involved that lead officers to die by suicide. Psychological autopsies have been suggested as a method to retrospectively examine the recent life of the officer who died by suicide to determine relevant factors associated with the suicide. The psychological autopsy obtains comprehensive retrospective information about victims of completed suicide, and much of the data needed for a psychological autopsy can be found in a social history. There has been little published on using psychological autopsies to examine police suicides. Additional research with this method may prove to be useful in determining the course of suicide among police.

Lastly, we must not forget those who have been left behind by the tragedy of suicide. Unfortunately, a suicide leaves behind an estimated quarter million people each year. This figure is likely an underestimation, as it may not account for the emergency responders, health care providers, coworkers, and friends affected by the suicide. The grief response associated with suicide is different. Feelings of loss are often magnified in suicide survivors by feelings of guilt, confusion, rejection, shame, anger, and the effects of stigma and trauma. Furthermore, survivors of suicide loss are at higher risk of developing major depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicidal behaviors, as well as a prolonged form of grief.

In conclusion, our priority should be suicide prevention, moving towards zero suicides in policing. As the title of this book implies we must “Stop Officer Suicide” (SOS). Looking to the future, recent legislation has helped to do just this. The Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act (2018) (LEMHWA) and the Law Enforcement Suicide Data Collection Act requires the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to provide information on suicide rates in law enforcement and for other purposes. Hopefully, these new acts will move us ever so closer to ending this tragic loss of life.

John Violanti

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- Joiner, T. E., Jr. (2003). Contagion of suicidal symptoms as a function of assortative relating and shared relationship stress in college roommates. *Journal of adolescence*, 26(4), 495–504. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-1971\(02\)00133-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-1971(02)00133-1).

Foreword

When asked to write the foreword by Dr. Olivia Johnson, (better known to me as Olivia), I was humbled. In the thirty plus years that I have worked in the field of Mental Health/Suicide Prevention for Law Enforcement personnel, she is one of the few that has passionately pushed to find solutions to issues of mental health/suicide prevention for over 900,000 officers and federal agencies nationwide.

I am extremely excited about this new book because of her timely ability to address the present issues with future solutions! Many people can tell you what the problem is but are short on providing solutions to these difficult issues.

This book will change not only what the difficult issues that we face in 2021, but what approach we must take in finding lasting solutions. In being the accomplished writer that she is, this book is written where a multitude of secondary professionals such as counselors, therapists, primary care physicians, clergy, trainers, and other researchers will find it interesting as a learning experience in their profession. Also, Olivia’s book will help communities, friends, and families to better understand the emotional issues their community police officers face on a daily basis.

Our Law Enforcement agencies nationwide are facing major challenges in addressing the crime-related issues of our communities. Issues of police safety and social issues are growing each day, but the more pressing issue of all has not been addressed and is proving as a “malignant cancer” called “Police Suicide.” As any person finds with a “stage four cancer,” an aggressive treatment program is vital. Research such as Olivia’s is committed to finding treatment and solutions to this mental health issue.

In Proverbs 3:13, the writer says:

“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom,
And the man that getteth understanding.”

May we take the opportunity to gain such wisdom and understanding in the pages of this book.

National Police Suicide Foundation
Winter Haven, FL, USA

Dr. Robert E. Douglas Jr,

Preface

This book serves as a much-needed paradigm shift on how we must begin addressing and responding to law enforcement suicide. Suicide is and continues to be a leading of US law enforcement officers. However, very little has been done to not only collect and validate such deaths, but to adequately investigate the true depth of the problem.

This book centered on data collected around suicides, attempts, and drug overdose deaths of current, former, and retired law enforcement and corrections officers from 2017 to 2019. The data produced ten common themes known as *The Fatal 10*. These themes were addressed throughout the book, providing real-world ideas, stories, case studies, strategies, solutions, and recommendations to help reduce deaths by suicide among the law enforcement population.

For too long, these types of deaths have carried immense shame and stigma. We keep hearing people chant “*it’s okay to not be okay*,” “*smash the stigma*,” and that mental health matters, but shame and stigma appear at times to be just too strong to break through. There remains a dark, heavy veil of what can only be described as a place no officer wants to go. There is a fear in this place. A fear of the unknown. The unknown is not knowing if what one reveals about themselves to another person will help them or could possibly cost them everything. Revealing to a stranger that you are struggling and that you may be suicidal, and not knowing what could happen is terrifying. Officers would rather remain silent and suffer alone. At least in this place, they know nothing will change, but the outcome will not usually get better on its own.

Most of the effort regarding suicide in general has been placed on prevention efforts even though research shows this is simply not working. Though such efforts are important, we cannot continue to place so much weight on these efforts. Rather, it is through assessing risk and suicidal behaviors, addressing behavioral cues, recognition of signs and symptoms, focusing on problematic and unhealthy behaviors, and inoculation and vaccination protocols that these types of deaths will begin to

decline. Saving lives is the key. In turn, we often save families and careers. We must do more to defend and protect our law enforcement officers, especially knowing how much negativity they face and everything they are exposed to.

Belleville, IL, USA
Toronto, ON, Canada
Buffalo, NY, USA
Brooklyn, NY, USA

Olivia Johnson
Konstantinos Papazoglou
John Violanti
Joseph Pascarella

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About the Editors



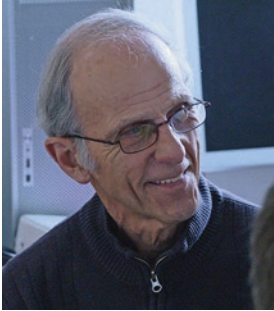
Olivia Johnson, DM is founder of the Blue Wall Institute, an Air Force veteran, former police officer, and published author. She belongs to numerous professional organizations and boards. Dr. Johnson is a subject expert in police officer wellness, suicide and prevention and recently received the Law Enforcement Psychological Autopsy Certification from the American Association of Suicidology. She holds a master’s in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the University of Missouri, St. Louis, and a doctorate in Organizational Leadership Management from the University of Phoenix. Dr. Johnson formerly served as an Advisory Board member for

VALOR Officer Safety and Wellness Program regarding curriculum review for de-escalation training and techniques. She previously worked as a Senior Research Associate for the Institute for Intergovernmental Research as a Lead Instructor for the VALOR Officer Safety Program and was the Program Advisor and Lead Instructor for the Suicide Awareness for Law Enforcement Officers (SAFLEO) Program.



Konstantinos Papazoglou, PhD, CPsych is a licensed psychologist (clinical, police, and forensic). His research work focuses on law enforcement stress, trauma, wellness, performance, and resilience. He is the founder and director of the ProWellness Inc., a division of his psychology professional corporation, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. In addition, he is also the principal founder of the POWER Project, a nonprofit public benefit corporation in San Diego, California, USA. He completed his postdoctoral appointment with Yale School of Medicine. He served as a police officer for

15 years with the Hellenic national police and he resigned as a police captain. He authored numerous scholarly articles, edited books, and presented in many major conferences.



John Violanti, PhD is a Full Research Professor in the Department of Epidemiology and Environmental Health, School of Public Health and Health Professions, University at Buffalo, NY. He is a police veteran, serving with the New York State Police for 23 years as a trooper, criminal investigator, and later as a coordinator in the Psychological Assistance Program (EAP). Dr. Violanti has authored over 140 peer-reviewed articles on shift work, stress, and PTSD and has written and edited eighteen books on topics of police stress, trauma, and suicide. Dr. Violanti served as a presenter on the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) and for the President's Commission on Law enforcement (2020) discussing police mental and physical health. Dr. Violanti has been nominated seven times for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's Charles C. Shepard award.



Joseph Pascarella is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at Saint Joseph's College in Brooklyn, NY. Dr. Pascarella was also a Post-Doctoral Research Associate at the Violence Institute of New Jersey at Rutgers University and a Retired Captain and Commanding Officer from the New York Police Department. Dr. Pascarella also does consulting for the National Institute of Justice and was also a recipient (2003) of a Fulbright Fellowship to lecture and conduct research at the National Police College of Finland in Espoo, Finland. Dr. Pascarella has published in journals and encyclopedias, and his research interests include police organizational management and strategic initiatives, homeland security for police and law enforcement agencies, and transnational crime and criminal networks.

About the Authors



Nichole Alvarez, Ph.D. is a board member as well as the California State and Research Director of the National Police Suicide Foundation, Inc. She is a Clinical Forensic Psychologist at Corcoran State Prison. Dr. Alvarez research interests are related to post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide prevention, police stress, and the breakdown of the family unit. She has presented at Cal Fire: Companion Officer Program, The National Police Suicide Foundation: Breakdown of the Family Unit in Law Enforcement Officers regarding Suicide. She assisted with the development of Line of Duty Death Management System Handbook for a local police department. She has spoken

at several California Police departments regarding suicide prevention. In addition, she was a part of the IACP’s National Consortium on Preventing Law Enforcement Suicide. She has currently been invited to collaborate in the phase two of the National Consortium on Preventing Law Enforcement Suicide, a project of the Bureau of Justice Assistance which is the Comprehensive Framework for Law Enforcement Suicide prevention and the Messaging About Suicide Prevention in Law enforcement for the next 2 years.



Sajel Bellon, Ed.D., R.P., C.T.S.S. is a Behavioural Science Professor, Psychotherapist, and the Founder of Mind Armour® & SOS Psychotherapy. She is driven to “un-stigmatize” the suicidal mind, while building beyond resiliency to post-traumatic growth. Her focus is bringing forward integrated research strategies for mental health, education, and systemic culture change within the First Responder and high-stress sectors.

Bellon is a pioneer in linking the “family” to the minimization and prevention of occupational stress injuries and loss of life to suicide, based on her own first-hand experience as a spouse and family member to the Emergency Service sector. Emphasizing psychological safety and connection as key pillars, Bellon helps organizations enhance their mental wellness promotion, trauma prevention, and recovery **processes**.

Bellon has developed programs and delivered talks around the globe, including Canada, the United States, and Australia, speaking for a variety of post-secondary institutions and organizations such as Harvard Business School, Berkeley School of Engineering, Central Queensland University, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the International Law Enforcement Educators & Trainers Association, and the **Armed Forces**.



Stephanie Schweitzer Dixon, M.S. is a suicidologist and the CEO and founder of SSD Consulting. She works with nonprofit organizations, community task forces, suicide loss survivors, first responders, and public safety personnel, providing consultation and training on suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, including starting and sustaining LOSS (Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors) Teams. Ms. Schweitzer Dixon has thirteen and a half years of experience managing a nonprofit suicide prevention organization. She trained various professionals, including first responders and law enforcement officers, about suicide prevention

and crisis intervention strategies. During those years, she coordinated a LOSS Team, helping suicide loss survivors while working with law enforcement agencies. Her expertise focuses on suicide loss survivors, implementing and sustaining LOSS Team Programs, and law enforcement suicide prevention and postvention. Ms. Schweitzer Dixon has a master's degree in Forensic Psychology with a concentration in Mental Health Workers, First Responders, and Disaster Teams. She is a suicide prevention and postvention trainer and a member of the National Police Suicide Foundation, the American Psychological Association, and the National LOSS Team Conference Planning Committee.



Marla W. Friedman, Psy.D. P.C. is a Clinical/Police Psychologist. She has 35+ years of clinical experience. She specializes in treating resistant trauma, OCD, anxiety, and depression and is certified in sexual health. She is fluent in Sign Language and serves the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community.

She is trained in offender profiling, detection of deception, and interview and interrogation (Reid). She is certified in Investigative Psychology from John J. College of Criminal Justice (NYC). She works on cold case homicides and missing persons for police departments and major crimes task forces.

She is a national trainer, curriculum developer, and creates video training films for law enforcement. She also frequently publishes on issues of mental health, trauma cessation, and suicide prevention for police and other first responders. She has trained for the FBI at their National Academy in Quantico, VA, ICAC Task Force Teams, FTOs, and police departments with her *Building a Better Cop*[™] program. She is also an Adjunct Faculty member at the College of DuPage Police Academy (SLEA) and Dr. Friedman is the current Chairman of Badge of Life. She is the primary architect in building a comprehensive mental health and suicide prevention program used nationally.



Patrick Funkhouser worked as police officer for 28 years and received 33 awards and commendations. Patrick spent 17 years as a major crimes investigator during which time he testified as an expert witness in firearms in both state and federal courts. He has been certified as an Armorer by numerous gun manufacturers and is a Master Firearms Instructor teaching pistol and urban police rifle. Patrick is a graduate of the FBI Hazardous Devices School at Redstone Arsenal in Alabama and served as a Bomb Technician on a working bomb squad. Twice in his career Patrick was sworn as a Special U.S. Deputy Marshal, once as a Bomb

Technician and the other while working on an F.B.I. Safe Streets Task Force. His career ranks included Patrolman, Detective, and Patrol Sergeant. He has taught Firearms, Force on Force, Defensive Tactics, and has been asked to present expert training on firearms and firearms evidence for various law enforcement agencies and groups as well as the University of Illinois College of Law.



Joseph Gallo is currently the Assistant Director at the University of Illinois—Police Training Institute. Joe has over 28 years of law enforcement experience, which included various assignments in Patrol, Investigations, and SWAT. Joseph retired as the Deputy Chief of the Champaign Police Department in 2018. Joseph is a graduate of the FBI National Academy (#243), Northwestern University School of Staff and Command, and the Senior Management Institute for Police.



Heath Grant Prior to returning to the full-time faculty of John Jay College of Criminal Justice in 2013, Dr. Grant was most recently the Director of Research of the Police Executive Research Forum, a leading Washington DC organization dedicated to advancing law enforcement and crime prevention internationally. Formerly, as CEO of Success for Kids (SFK), he oversaw the planning, implementation, curriculum development, partnerships and strategic program alliances, and evaluation of the organization’s international programs and services. A 15-year program executive, his experience and innovative style has positioned SFK’s unique approach to Social Emotional Learning as one

of the most sought after program partnership opportunities throughout Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas. On behalf of the Asia Foundation, he also recently developed training curricula for the Bangladesh Police on community policing. Since 2019, Dr. Grant has served as the Director of the master’s program in Criminal Justice at John Jay College.



Tine Jaeckle, Ph.D. has served as a crisis and trauma consultant, counselor, and instructor with law enforcement and first responders for approximately twenty years. Dr. Jaeckle has authored publications on law enforcement suicide and supervises and conducts research on this issue. In 2016, Dr. Jaeckle was selected to receive the Commitment to Social Change Award from Walden University for her work in raising awareness on suicide and PTSD in this population. Dr. Jaeckle continues to instruct at Nova Southeastern University and other higher education institutions and speaks nationally on officer stress, critical incidents, suicide, and trauma mitigation.



Jorey Krawczyn has an extensive career extending over 50 years in law enforcement, forensic psychology, and teaching. His law enforcement experience ranges from undercover narcotics investigations to the administrative duties of Chief of Police (Retired). He served his two-year psychological internship with the Florida Department of Corrections providing evaluation and treatment to violent offenders and sexual predators.

He served **3** years as a Senior Police Psychologist for the US Department of Justice: International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) assigned to Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo, and Tanzania. He served an additional three years as the

Academic Director for the US Department of State's International Law Enforcement Academy and two years with their Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs as a Psychological Advisor to foreign judges, prosecutors, and senior law enforcement officials on matters of Radicalized Violent Extremists. Dr. Krawczyn is a faculty member at Saint Leo University, Department of Criminal Justice Graduate Studies. He has testified as an Expert Witness in cases on police behaviors, police testing methodologies, and violent offenders. He holds a Bachelor's in Criminal Justice Administration, one Master's in Human Development, a second Master's in Instructional Design, and a Doctorate in Counseling Psychology.



Cathryn Lavery, MS, PhD received her Ph.D. in Criminal Justice from the Graduate Center/CUNY and MS from Iona College. She is a certified mediator and certified as a trainer from the Clery Center on Title IX. She received additional certifications on sexual victimization and trauma and forensic mental health issues. She is currently Chair for Pace University’s *Criminal Justice and Security* programs for the Westchester and NYC campuses. Before Pace she worked at Iona College, where she served as Chair and Graduate Coordinator of the Criminal Justice Department. She is contributor and co-editor of *Socio-*

Political Risk Management: Assessing and Managing Global Insecurity (Lavery, Zaino, Engemann; DeGruyter Publications, 2022). She recently coauthored and published an article for *Frontiers Journal*, entitled *Caring for the Guardians—Exploring Needed Directions and Best Practices for Police Resilience, Practice and Research* (Johnson, O., Grant, H. & C. Lavery, 2020). Dr. Lavery has published in various journals including *Frontiers*, *Acta Psychopathologica*, *Journal of Behavioral Health*, *ACJS*, and the *Journal of Law Enforcement*.



Beth Milliard has been a police officer with York Regional Police in Ontario, Canada, for 19 years and is currently a Uniform Staff Sergeant. She is also an adjunct professor, with Georgian College for 12 years and Simon Fraser University for the past 3 years creating and teaching an online course called Code of Ethics for Peer Support.

She has worked in all areas of policing: uniform, investigative, and administrative. However, her most rewarding role to date is working in Peer Support and being part of the creation and implementation of initiatives related to mental health and psychological wellness for first responders. As a subject matter expert in Project Safeguard and Peer Support, she has had the opportunity to speak at venues across North America and has been the author and peer reviewer of many articles related to first responder mental health and wellness. She has completed her Master’s in Leadership looking at the psychological effects of police officers conducting internet child exploitation investigations, and she has her PhD in Criminal Justice/Law and Public Policy with an emphasis in mental **health**.



Paul E. O'Connell, Ph.D., J.D. began his professional career with the New York City Police Department (NYPD) as a police officer, Police Academy instructor, in-service trainer, and curriculum developer. He is an attorney and former Associate Dean of the School of Arts and Science and former chair of the Department of Criminal Justice at Iona College, New Rochelle, NY. He is a full Professor and teaches at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. He specializes in the topics of police performance measurement, strategic planning, integrity management, and law enforcement training systems.

He is the author of *Performance-Based Management for Police Organizations*, Waveland (2007), and *Police Performance Appraisals: A Comparative Perspective*, CRC Press (2012).

Dr. O'Connell is a Senior Public Safety Consultant with the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), Center for Public Safety Management (CPSM), and has provided consulting services to a variety of municipalities and government agencies in thirty-four (US) states. He is a Fulbright grant recipient and has worked with the Turkish National Police (TNP), in Ankara, Turkey, and police professionals in Mexico City and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).



Jana Price-Sharps is a licensed psychologist specializing in forensic and first responder psychology. She is the CEO and founder of the California Forensic Institute, Inc. (CFI). She provides a myriad of services for numerous law enforcement agencies. These services include pre-employment evaluations, debriefings, mental health and resiliency training, crisis interventions, psychological treatment, and hostage negotiation consultation. She is also the President and Clinical Director of SERI, a nonprofit training institute that provides clinical services to the families and spouses of first responder families. Her clinical practice focuses on treating complex trauma in first responders including law enforcement, fire personnel, and combat veterans. Dr. Price-Sharps teaches full-time at Walden University in the Forensic Psychology PhD program. She also teaches part-time at California State University, Fresno, in the Department of Psychology.



Charles W. Russo is an education and public safety professional with over 25 years of experience in both the public and private sectors. He has a doctorate degree in public affairs, coupled with graduate degrees in criminal justice and education—instructional design. Dr. Russo has been involved in online learning since 1995 and pioneered many of the learning models utilized throughout the world today. Dr. Russo’s recent articles have focused on emerging law enforcement technology, nongovernment intelligence actors, and post-traumatic stress experienced by first responders.

Dr. Russo’s law enforcement career has spanned four decades and involved all areas of patrol, special operations, and investigations. His response to dynamic incidents earned him several awards ranging from the life saver award to the medal of valor. He has had the privilege and honor of training and educating law enforcement professionals from six continents and numerous countries.

Dr. Russo’s proven knowledge, skills, and abilities in the areas of public safety and training/education solutions have enabled him to consult with governments and organizations throughout the world. Dr. Russo has supervised and managed domestic and international personnel and programs for university, nonprofit, government, and Fortune 1000 organizations.



Jarrod Sadulski has a Ph.D. in criminal justice and is an associate professor at American Military University. He has participated in speaking engagements and presentations in the United States, Europe, and Central America on the topics of stress management in policing, global security, human trafficking, international drug trafficking, and police responses to domestic terrorism. He has conducted in-country training on police stress management to the Belize Police Department in Central America and has conducted research on resilience from police stress to prevent officer suicides. He has over 20 years of law enforcement experience between federal and local law enforcement agencies.



Michael Schlosser is the Director of the University of Illinois Police Training Institute. He holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Governor's State University, a Master's Degree in Legal Studies from the University of Illinois, and a PhD in Education from the University of Illinois. He retired as a lieutenant from the Rantoul Police Department in 2004.

Dr. Schlosser has conducted and collaborated in numerous research projects at the University of Illinois and is credited for his innovative ideas towards police reform. He has authored dozens of articles, made numerous radio and television appearances, and given over 100 presentations across the country on topics

such as police tactics, police training, use of force, de-escalation techniques, control and arrest tactics, the intersection of police and race, diversity, police officer wellness, and police family wellness.



Kimberly Spanjol, Ph.D. is a researcher and professor of Criminal Justice and Sociology at Iona College in New Rochelle, New York, as well as a licensed mental health counselor and behavior analyst with nearly 30 years of clinical and teaching experience. She specializes in Green and Non-speciesist Criminology, Humane Education, and Individual/Systemic Behavior Change and has developed and teaches courses such as Animals and Criminal Justice, Animal and Human Health, Species Justice, Environmental Crime, and

Environmental Justice. She also serves as a consultant and trainer for Integrated Justice Solutions, Inc. and develops humane education and ethical animal-assisted interventions, trains mental health providers in LINK Violence and treating animal cruelty offenders, and is currently developing an Ethical Animal Assisted Intervention Clinical Training Program and Critical Animal Studies minor program that examine the intersections of Human Rights, Animal Protection, and Environmental Preservation.



A. Renee Thornton graduated summa cum laude from Walden University, with a doctorate in Crisis Intervention. She also holds an MBA, a master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, a bachelor's in Psychology and Communications, and is a distinguished honor graduate from the Defense Information School in Ft. Meade, Maryland. A sought-after serial entrepreneur, Renee has served as a leadership and workforce development, content creation, instructional design, and research executive for public and private companies around the globe.

A founding member of Pathfinder Resilience, creator of the HEROES Project model for Navigating Adversity, and founder of the nonprofit advocacy organization the Command Post, Renee's specialty is pioneering validated methods for developing resilience. Her organizational leadership skills result in mitigating risk in critical professions and her individual coaching inspires renewed hope, self-confidence, and optimistic performance in each of her **clients**.

In addition to writing nonfiction and publishing in peer-reviewed journals, trade magazines, and blogs, she is pursuing publication as a seasonal fiction author highlighting beautiful Mackinaw Island, Michigan. Her favorite place to unwind and reconnect is anywhere along the Great Lake shoreline of Superior, Huron, and **Michigan**.

Chapter 1

Pre-employment Eligibility and Predicating Self-Harm in Law Enforcement Personnel



Olivia Johnson, Beth Milliard, and Jorey Krawczyn

Introduction

Suicide is a leading cause of death among all ages in the USA (WISQARS, 2020), with males being four times more likely than females to die by suicide (Hedegaard et al., 2020). Being Male increases one's risk for completed suicide. However, other factors increase one's risk of suicide, to include occupation. Policing is and has always been a Male-dominated profession, more specifically a White male-dominated profession (FBI, 2017). White males, to include those working as police officers, seemingly never "age out" of their risk for suicide.

The data revealed 10 risk factors or indicators in which subjects were at increased risk for suicide (Johnson, 2020). These fatal factors, referred to by Johnson as the "Fatal 10," were noted in a majority of the cases of completed suicide shown in Johnson's data (2017–2019). These factors were noted as occurring independently and in conjunction with other factors, e.g., interpersonal relationship issues, substance abuse, cumulative stress and trauma, sleep disorders, mental health concerns, medical issues, access to firearms, under investigation, pending or nearing retirement, and other major life events (Johnson, 2020). This book aims to not only work towards a better understanding of the issues contributing to the risk of suicide among this occupational group (e.g., the Fatal 10, pre- and post-employment risk factors, and other external factors), but to do so in an in-depth and meaningful way, to help reduce the number of suicide attempts and the number of officers who die by suicide.

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However, understanding the role of suicide among this occupational group is not cut and dry. There remains a need for many to try to simplify suicide, in-part, to better understand the complexity of the issue. However, 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. Despite years of prevention and research efforts, suicidal thoughts, behaviors, and completed suicide remain a growing worldwide health concern and a major contributor to premature mortality (Franklin et al., 2017; World Health Organization (WHO), 2016).

Suicide in the USA remains the 10th leading cause of death for all age groups and accounts for the loss of 48,000 lives annually (Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2018). Suicide rates vary widely from state to state but are on the rise in nearly every state (CDC, 2018). In the past two decades, suicide rates nationwide have increased 30 percent (Stone et al., 2018). During this same timeframe, rates of suicide among the US working population (i.e., those aged 16–64 years) have increased 40 percent (Peterson et al., 2020). Those considered among the working population are representative (either in whole or part) as Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials (aka Gen Y), and Gen Z. Among this same working-class population, occupational risk factors for suicide also exist.

For several centuries and specifically since the middle 1800s, 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 (Inwald, 1988) (i.e., police officers are known to run towards danger, while the public is running away). Being male and excelling in physical fitness was also seen as desirable qualities to succeed as a police officer. The criteria for becoming a police officer were very sparse, and higher education qualities were not a mandatory requirement.

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. As society has evolved, the expectations of a police officer have increased, and police organizations across countries in general (e.g., Europe, Australia, New Zealand) and North America are starting to re-evaluate the way they select and screen potential recruits. In addition to being physically fit, police officers are expected to fulfill many roles, which include dealing with people in crisis, de-escalating volatile situations, being able to regulate emotions, and stay 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 great amount of operational, organizational, and personal stressors that, if not kept in check, can lead to a variety of mental health issues.

Along with these organizational factors, there have been four dynamic entities that operated somewhat independently of one another while unintentionally synchronizing, influencing, and correlating their efforts to maintain civil order and the rule of law while advancing technology and American culture. These are the law

enforcement profession, American social-culture, psychological, and governing political entities. For several decades they worked together in synchronicity with minor periods of time, one or more of the dynamics moving out of synch and seeking a separate path of discovery, but once again returning to the dynamic fold. Over the previous 20 years, the synchronicity has increasingly diminished as each dynamic forges a distinctly different path with little supportive effort to the original grouping. It is not the intent to negatively portray or disparage the four dynamics, individually or collectively. Rather observe and analyze the methodology of the desynchronizing process and how it has manifested with law enforcement officers into the numerous risk factors for potential self-destructive behaviors, including suicide.

The world's technologically based economy has created great opportunities for many young individuals seeking financial security and rewarding careers. A ripple effect has been felt within the governmental entities, specifically in the public service fields such as first responders and law enforcement. No longer are high school students exposed during civic classes to make social commitments for serving the greater good of their communities. As society enters the decade of 2020, society is witnessing and experiencing efforts to have USA and world history rewritten, alerted, and removed for the next generations while restricting the criminal justice system through defunding efforts and provisional enforcements. All these factors will continue to add social pressure, individual stress, and political compromises to future recruitment efforts and individual recruit's considerations and decisions to become a member of this profession.

Strategical recruiting and selecting police candidates remain a crucial step for all police organizations. As the needs of the policing profession change, so does the pre-employment standards. Police organizations need to re-evaluate their current practices, which include administering the appropriate tests, completing fulsome background checks, and expanding beyond the standard psychological assessments.

As employment and training standards for law enforcement officers continued to rise due in part to litigation and the continuing complexities of our society, less money and benefits were available to attract truly qualified applicants. Several states have created basic minimum standards for the employment and training of police officers. When one factors in the complex social dynamics within the employment market, basic minimum standards are no longer basic or minimum; rather, they become the norm or the standard. Law enforcement administrators now must operate within a diminished employment market and attempt to identify the "really not too bad" candidate prior to employment.

History of Pre-employment Screening for Police Officers

After World War II, many veterans assimilated into the public sector of law enforcement and brought with them their para-military organizational structure, conflict resolution skills and self-discipline. In retrospect, one could easily identify several

group characteristics like dedication, determination, and commitment, such traits that are born and nurtured within adversities of war and political conflicts.

With the 1950s, society had become one of prosperity and affluence (Galbraith, 1969). Like interest rates, crime reports were low. The next twenty years, encompassing Vietnam and the Civil Rights era, would significantly challenge our political system. The judicial branch of government, through court rulings and interpretations of the law, would begin to distress the legislative process of law. And the police, as enforcers of the law, would be challenged and influenced by this new dynamic for the next thirty to forty years. At the turn of the century with 9–11, the Iraq and Afghanistan wars continued to create demands and adjustments for police officers. These personal histories and experiences can create a psychological challenge to pre-employment screening for any size agency. The ultimate goal of psychological testing is to evaluate an officer's fitness for duty and to protect the agency and the public. However, over the years, pre-employment screening has been used to determine job performance, personality, and intelligence. For example, Shusman et al. (1984) reported several purposes for pre-employment screening of police officers. First, employers want to reduce and eliminate issues such as absenteeism, which could result in understaffing, excessive overtime, and a lack of trust among officers. Second, disciplinary issues that would increase department expenses, administrative time, and litigation. Third, screening helps to avoid excessive use of force against citizens or fellow officers. Last, questionable officer behavior may result in bad media publicity and lengthy court litigation.

Military veterans continued to comprise the majority of positions within the major police departments of this country during the 1960s and 1970s (Barker, 1996). They consistently demonstrated their ability to take and follow orders. With civil rights marches and protests against this country's involvement in Vietnam resulting in riots as well as the burning and looting of several major cities, police became the soldiers against civil insurrection. This social unrest and change in the political direction of the country with the actions, protests, and riots of ANTIFA, Black Lives Matter has resurrected the peacekeeper role of the police.

Time has brought about social healing and political change as the police were placed within a new responsible role. They were to interact and understand their communities as sociologists, deal with crime and the criminals as criminologists, prepare reports and documentation as lawyers, and then deal with job stressors and personal family issues as psychologists and social service workers. The complexities of these challenges and demands would redefine the law enforcement officer in the new millennium and beyond.

Police officers have immense power and are permitted the authority and discretion to enforce laws, arrest, detain, and search individuals. In addition, they are legally mandated to use as much force as necessary, which may include taking someone's life. Decisions made by police officers can greatly impact the organization, coworkers, family, and entire communities. Therefore, it is appropriate that the ultimate goal of psychological testing is to determine who is the best suited for a career in law enforcement (Galusha, 2017).

One of the complex challenges that arrived in the new millennium for police was the specialized units developing in many organizations and being initiated and supported through advanced and specialized training courses and even into recruitment strategies. The opportunity of being more than just a cop or police officer on patrol grew into career positions of working narcotics, homicide, violent crimes, cyber-crimes, and crimes against children. These would prove to take a heavy psychological and physical toll on these specialized officers.

As early as 100 years, certain police agencies typically used psychological testing to predict performance levels in potential police officers. For example, Weiss and Inwald (2018) explained that the Stanford–Binet assessment was originally administered to police candidates. Although the validity of Terman’s results is controversial, his study had a significant impact on the selection of early police officer candidates and more modern test usage (i.e., establishing correlations between results and future performance) (as stated by Terman, 1917).

A decade later, Thurstone (1922) administered the Army Alpha Intelligence test to a police officer sample and reported that people in law enforcement positions were generally less intelligent than those in the general population. He also found an inverse relationship between intelligence scores and experience (i.e., the higher ranking, the lower the score) and hypothesized that the more intelligent law enforcement officer would often pursue more lucrative positions in alternative professions, rather than remaining in law enforcement. Studies concerning personality characteristics were also examined. For example, Murphy (1973), who administered the Rorschach Inkblot to a group of police officers, found that some variables were correlated to job satisfaction and motivation for promotion (as stated by Kates, 1950).

In 1967, the President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice recommended screening all potential police officers in the United States. The purpose behind the screening and standardization of the selection process was to choose more qualified people to become police officers. In addition, in 1973, the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals in the United States recommended that every police agency follow a formal selection process that includes (a) a written test of mental ability or aptitude, (b) an oral interview, (c) a psychological examination, and (d) a background investigation (Cochrane et al., 2003).

International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)

The International Association of Chiefs of Police XE "International Association of Chiefs of Police" (2014) developed an updated set of guidelines for pre-employment psychological evaluations. These recommendations address such criteria as examiner evaluations, job analysis, testing, interview, candidate background, and use of the evaluation. Screening processes for police agencies in the United States also expanded to other police services in North America and around the world.