POLICE SUICIDE:
ACUITY OF INFLUENCE

Doctoral Dissertation
Research Proposal Defense

In Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

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Dr. Samuel Pizzi, Ph.D., Doctoral Committee Chair
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Q1: How does the design clearly relate to the Purpose of the Study?

- A phenomenological approach establishes a participants’ perspective on the issue of police suicide (Kirk and Miller, 1986).
- Used to dispute familiar beliefs and or themes and misconceptions about the phenomenon being researched (Manen’s, 1990).
- Facilitates further appreciation of the participants’ perceptions, yielding a more meaningful account of common daily experiences (Manen’s, 1990).
- A qualitative design contributes to issues of reliability and credibility of participant responses (Moustakas, 1994).
- Qualitative designs focus on the perceptions and anticipated wealth of information that the participants will provide (Moustakas, 1994).
Research Question:

What are the lived experiences concerning the incidence of suicide among law enforcement officers?

A phenomenological method is the research of the lived human experience (Moustakas, 1994).
Q3: What are the data sources? Are they useful, reliable, and sufficient?

Data collection will consist of an individual interview (Boyd, 2001):
- 7 demographic
- 9 interview questions.
- Allows for privacy
- Contributes to participant honesty.

Data collection cultivates a deeper appreciation of the specific lived experience of participants (Boyd, 2001).

Interviews would be conducted until the point of data saturation (between 2 to 10 participants).

Interview would permit themes to emerge (Boyd, 2001).

Data would then be analyzed using the NVivo® software.

The data collected should provide insight into the complex phenomenon of law enforcement suicide (Boyd, 2001).

Research results will shed light upon issue of suicide (Boyd, 2001).
Q4: How is the design feasible within the stated limitations and delimitations and the established time frame?

- Available literature review on suicide within the law enforcement profession is limited, but relevant (Burke and Mikkelsen, 2007).
- The lack of literature on police officer suicide may contribute frankness by the participant’s questions (Burke and Mikkelsen, 2007).
- A consideration to feasibility of qualitative design yields an appreciating of participants’ responses as being interpreted as individualistic (Burke and Mikkelsen, 2007).
Q5: Is a realistic timeline established?

Time availability could be addressed accordingly by scheduling appointments at the convenience of the police officers:

- Participants will be allowed adequate time to respond to all questions.
- Participants will be allowed time to have any questions or concerns answered.
- A participant’s questions or concerns will be addressed when solicited and afforded accordingly.
- In the event that a participant requests a break, adequate time will be afforded to the person making the request.
Q6: Though the IRB has the final say on this aspect of a dissertation, how does the design attend to the protection of human subjects?

- The use of a phenomenological research design according to Sokolowski’s, (2007) facilitates for the better collection of information and further understanding about a participant (van Manen’s, 1990).
- The research emphasizes lived human experience (Moustakas, 1994).
- The intimate setting allows for privacy, which may contribute to participant honesty and feeling safe to disclose (Moustakas, 1994).
- Confidentiality is assured (Moustakas, 1994).
Q7: Is the sample clearly defined?

For any external validity or generalizability to be evident, a random selection of the participants to be questioned ought to occur (Creswell, 2005).

Generalizability can influence the external validity of any research (Neuman, 2005).

The projected generalizability of the proposed research would be limited by a small sample size.

A random sample of participants would be selected from the Coral Gables Police Department (at least 10 police officers).
Phenomenology research enables a broader appreciation for the research of lived experience (van Manen, 1990).

It is appropriate in relationship to the problem, purpose, and framework (van Manen, 1990).

Phenomenology research yields (van Manen, 1990):

- A better understanding of the perceptions and beliefs about the lived experiences of law enforcement officers (Miller, 1986).
- Provides insight into the reasons why one would consider suicide as an option (Miller, 1986).
- Disputes familiar beliefs and or themes (Miller, 1986).
- Sheds light into misconceptions about the phenomenon being researched (Miller, 1986).

Police officers are classified as being a high-risk population with a high propensity rate for suicide (CDC, 2005).
Q9: What steps have been taken to ensure that this is the most appropriate design for the study and the subject area?

- Qualitative designs:
  - Allows for a more copious interpretation of the phenomenon being researched (Moustakas, 1994).
  - Contributes to issues of reliability and credibility of a participant response (Moustakas, 1994).
  - Do not allow for the open communication of the event that is being researched by the research participant (Moustakas, 1994).

- A phenomenological research design would facilitate further appreciation of the participants’ perceptions, yielding a more meaningful account of common daily experiences (van Manen’s, 1990).

- This phenomenological research design facilitates for better collection of information and further understanding about a participants’ (Moustakas, 1994):
  - Impact and incidence of police suicide.
Suicide has grown to epidemic proportions in retrospect to the law enforcement community (Satcher’s, 1999).

According to the CDC (2005) suicide is a public health concern (Satcher’s, 1999).

The lack of acknowledging the vicarious liability by officers, supervisors, and administrators facilitates a common misnomer that suicide and depression are virtually nonexistent (Clark and White, 2003).

Qualitative research contributes to informed practice/literature in the field by providing:

- A distinctive interpretation of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).
- Broadens the existing literature review of suicide.
- Identifying the factors that could conceivably reduce the number of suicides within the law enforcement community; and,
- Enables further scholarly inquiry.

As a researcher, this subject is in line with what I would want to further pursue as a counselor and or clinician working in the field of law enforcement.
Q11. What alternative plans have been developed, should a problems arise in the research?

Remaining dutiful to the fact that:

- Police officers and police administration have distinct cultural norms and will encourage a conformity of conduct through what is often perceived as coercion from outside sources (Cross and Ashley, 2004).
- Police officers often mistrust individuals in administration (Violanti, 2007).
- Cultural norms significantly often amount to a sense of isolation and silence, which frequently discourages the need to come forward and seek help (Crank, 2004).
- An unwritten code about what is and is not acceptable within the police culture is often prevalent (Violanti, 2007).

The appropriateness for this research is described in relationship to the problem, purpose and framework of research proposal.

Remaining dutiful to that mission as a researcher should yield information that would facilitate a better understanding of the (Violanti, 2007):

- Perceptions
- beliefs about the lived experiences of law enforcement officers; and,
- Insight into the reasons why one would consider suicide as an option (Violanti, 2007).
ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS THAT MAY BE CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE
The aim of data collection is to:
- Cultivate a deeper appreciation of the specific lived experience of police officers; and,
- Increase awareness on the impact that police suicide has in the law enforcement community (Ngwenyama’s, 2001).

The data collected for the phenomenological qualitative research should:
- Provide insight into the complex phenomenon of law enforcement suicide (Ngwenyama’s, 2001).

Questions of concerns with respect to the notion of reduction of clustered groups and emerging themes (Ngwenyama’s, 2001):
- Does each statement and or question contain something adequate enough to constitute an understanding in and of itself (Ngwenyama, 2001)?
- Is it possible to reduce further the statement without violating the meaning of the statement presented by the participant (Ngwenyama, 2001)?
Research results may contribute to a better understanding of the issues (Quinn, 2005).

Understanding the issues may facilitate a reduction in the number of police suicides (Quinn, 2005).

A police officer’s perception of events and or situations may not necessarily mirror the authenticity of an event (Quinn, 2005).

Police officers form a sort of brotherhood among themselves and are often protected by a Code of Silence (Quinn, 2005).

Many police officers develop an attitude towards being disingenuous against outsiders (Quinn, 2005).

The power of the Code of Silence can become the weapons of choice for the police officer (Quinn, 2005).
Q3: Set a date for revision to be completed and the proposal returned to the doctoral dissertation research Chair.

A. One week from Proposal Defense (if needed to be made).
Q3: Verify that permissions have been requested when appropriate and work with the doctoral dissertation research Chair to ensure all permissions have been obtained.

Permission from Unit Commander (Attached letter) has already been obtained.