

Beyond Ferguson:

An Introduction to Police & Public Safety Psychology

Paul Detrick, PhD, ABPP

fps-stl@sbcglobal.net

(314) 837-7828

Kitaeff (2011) defines police psychology as:

“The application of psychological principles and methods to law enforcement.”

Brief History of PPSP

- Lewis Terman (1916) Stanford-Binet, San Jose, Ca. Police Department
- President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice (1967)
- Martin Reiser (1968) hired full time with the Los Angeles Police Department
- Mike Roberts hired full time with the San Jose Police Department
- American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP) recognizes Police and Public Safety Psychology as a specialty board (2010)
- APA Committee on Recognition of Specialties & Proficiencies in Psychology recognizes police psychology as a specialty (2013)

Beyond Ferguson

- Community oriented policing was prominent during the 1990s
- With the experience of 9/11, the war on terrorism, random public shootings, and school shootings in particular, all widely publicized by the media, policing took on a more militaristic tone.
- With the civil unrest and attention give to policing in the past year, many police departments are recognizing a need to institute or return to a more community oriented policing philosophy.
- This may provide an impetus for the growth of police psychology

Four Primary Practice Domains

- Clinical Intervention
- Assessment
- Operational Support
- Organizational Consultation

Clinical Interventions

- Employee assistance counseling
- Individual, group, marital, family counseling
- Critical incident debriefings
- Critical incident early intervention
- Wellness programs

Assessment

- Preemployment evaluations (pre and post-conditional offer)
- Fitness for duty evaluations
- Threat assessments
- Promotional evaluations

Operational Support

- Criminal profiling
- Crisis/hostage negotiation
- Threat assessments
- Workshops/training
- Peer support groups

Organizational Consultation

- Development of performance appraisals
- Mediation
- Management/supervisory consultation regarding personnel issues

In-house vs. Out-house Psychologists

- Type of service
- Advantages and disadvantages of each

Competent Practice in Police and Public Safety Psychology Requires Knowledge Of:

- Essential job functions
- Working conditions
- Common/novel stressors
- Normal and abnormal adaptation to occupational stress and trauma
- Research pertinent to resilience and recovery in public safety personnel
- Legal issues/guidelines related to providing services to public safety personnel and/or agencies

Primary Resources

- Police Psychology Service Section of the International Association of Chiefs of Police
- Society for Police and Criminal Psychology
- Police & Public Safety Section of Division 18 of APA, Psychologists in Public Service
- Blau, T. (1994): *Psychological Services for Law Enforcement*. New York: John Wiley.
- Kurke, M.I., & Scrivner, E.M. (1995): *Police Psychology into the 21st Century*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Kitaeff, J. (2011): *Handbook of Police Psychology*. New York: Routledge.