FEELING SAFE IN PRECARIOUS WORK: HOW WORKERS IN LIFE-AND-DEATH PROFESSIONS CREATE COMMUNITY HOLDING SPACES FOR SAFE EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

Kimberly Rocheville

A dissertation
submitted to the Faculty of
the department of Management and Organization
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation Committee:
Jean M. Bartunek, Chair, Boston College
Judith A. Clair, Boston College
Douglas T. Hall, Boston University
Christopher B. Keys, DePaul University

Boston College
Wallace E. Carroll School of Management
Graduate School

June 8, 2022

Copyright © 2022 Kimberly Rocheville

FEELING SAFE IN PRECARIOUS WORK: HOW WORKERS IN LIFE-AND-DEATH PROFESSIONS CREATE COMMUNITY HOLDING SPACES FOR SAFE EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

Kimberly Rocheville

Advisor: Jean M. Bartunek, Ph.D.

In certain professions, members are routinely exposed to situations where their life or the life of someone else is on the line. Workers in these professions are exposed to traumatic situations over the course of a career and are likely to experience certain feelings such as sadness, emotional pain, and fear in response to these traumatic events. Through two inductive qualitative studies, this dissertation builds theory around how individuals involved in life-and-death work (police officers), process the emotions that are elicited by traumatic events without violating the emotional norms of their profession that encourage suppression. These two studies show how individuals create a trusted group of “safe others” with whom they experience a psychological sense of community. Together, community members imbue certain physical spaces with meaning (“safe places”). When safe others come together in safe places, community holding spaces are created which enable the enactment of relational emotional processing.

I dedicate this to all those who work tirelessly
to protect “the vulnerable”,
sacrificing pieces of themselves along the way.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For those who know anything about my journey, it has been anything but traditional. I cannot claim that my journey was any more difficult than anyone else's because let's face it – the passage through a doctoral program is inherently complicated, painful, and uncertain. What I can assert is that I am here, finally wrapping up this expedition into academia, thanks to the many people along the way who have helped even more than they know. I want to acknowledge these individuals and communities who have supported me, pushed me, advocated for me, and believed in me along the way.

First and foremost, I want to thank the person without whom none of this would be possible. The person who believed in me in my lowest of lows – Jean Bartunek. Jean is one of the most incredible humans on this planet and I am so lucky to call her not only my mentor, but my friend. Jean's unfailing commitment to her students is unrivaled…well, unless you consider her commitment to supporting Dolly Parton, but that goes without saying. Jean, I am grateful for our 'conversations that never happened', and for all the fun we had along the way. I look forward to inviting you out to Omaha to continue our friendship and collaborations.

Second, I'd like to thank Tim Hall, my inspiration for starting the journey. Back in 2012 when I started my MBA, Tim was my first professor. We were in China as part of the program and it was my first time away from home, practically as far away as I could ever be. Yet, Tim has this magical way of making me feel paradoxically held comfortably in a place that exists beyond my comfort zone. Tim, I am so grateful that you encouraged me to pursue what at times felt unattainable. You never doubted my dreams, not once. Our meetings with Kathy Kram at the "Metro West Office" saved me, spiritually and professionally. Thank you.

Next, I'd like to acknowledge my final two committee members. When I first came to BC, Judy Clair never hesitated to help me find my voice and build my confidence as a scholar. Her feedback in those first few months at BC helped me to re-envision my dissertation into something meaningful to me and worthwhile to the field *and* to my informants. For that, and every moment since, I am grateful. Thank you, Judy. Lastly, for my committee anyway, I'd like to acknowledge a latecomer to the team. As the importance of community emerged in my data, Jean and I shared an epiphany that Chris Keys, a community psychologist (AND an important person in Jean's own dissertation experience), would make an excellent addition to the team. How lucky I am that he said yes! Chris, your experience is unrivaled and I'm so thankful for all your feedback, encouragement, and kindness along the way.

The doctoral experience is made livable, and dare I say even enjoyable, by our peers. I'd like to acknowledge four key peers, each of whom was there for me at a time of incredible need. Despite living the furthest from Boston, Elise Jones was an amazing community builder and made me feel like I belonged even when I had no reason to believe it was true. I'll never forget our contra dancing adventure together or our hike in the Blue Hills. You are a treasure. Next, Audrey Holm. Oh, Audrey. You've seen me at my absolute best and my deepest of despair. We've seen each other through the desire to be a mom and the reality of becoming a mom. I'm so glad we have each other. Next, to my daily motivation on this, our final stretch. Our Zoom working sessions got me through the proposal defense, the chaos that was the 2021-2022 job market, and of course, this dissertation. How will I ever start my work at 8am without you? Finally, to my officemate, Ben Innis. It was such a pleasure sharing a space with you, and as the findings of my dissertation would suggest, making our office a meaningful place together. Our little 543 was definitely a safe space for me and you made that possible.

I am blessed to have been welcomed by several broader communities. First, to the Management & Organization department of the Boston College Carroll School of Management. Inviting me into the doctoral program as you did was incredibly kind, and I will forever be grateful to each and every person who made this happen. To Mike Pratt and Judy Gordon, thank you for giving me this opportunity. I am also lucky to be a part of three research groups of wonderful humans who hold me accountable and cheer me on: The Community mini-community, BOSCon, and Tues/Thur writing group. To each group, thank you for providing me with a strong sense of community. It means everything to me.

I also want to acknowledge those with whom I started this journey. Those who saw promise in my work and influenced my early interests in this field. To Bill Kahn, Bess Rouse, and Michelle Barton, I am grateful for all I was able to learn from each of you along the way.

As a qualitative field researcher, my ability to complete this dissertation relied entirely on the goodwill of strangers to open their hearts and invite me to bear witness to their humbling stories of the realities of life-and-death work. To the 100+ individuals who welcomed me into their most vulnerable moments for the sake of this dissertation, I see you. Thank you.

Finally, I want to thank my family. Scott, my stalwart supporter. This dissertation is a literal map of our journey together, and I don't know about you, but I can't wait to see where we go with it in our past. The best really is yet to come. To my first born, Rowan Fox. You keep me honest in my pursuit of work-life harmony. May your never question your place in my world. To my bonus kids (Sydney & Gabrielle), parents, grandparents, brothers, aunts and uncles, cousins, and my niece and nephew, thank you for always cheering for me. There's about the be a Dr. in the family!

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES vii

LIST OF FIGURES viii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 2: STUDY 1 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS 9

Processing of emotions 9

Intrapersonal emotional processing 15

Emotional processing with others 20

Trauma in context: Emotional processing of traumatic events in life-and-death work 24

CHAPTER 3: STUDY 1 METHODS 31

Research Approach 31

Context and Sampling Strategy 31

Data Collection & Field Relations 33

Data Analysis 39

CHAPTER 4: STUDY 1 FINDINGS 44

CHAPTER 5: CONNECTING STUDY 1 & STUDY 2 74

CHAPTER 6: STUDY 2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS 77

Psychological Sense of Community (PSOC) 77

The importance of physical spaces for relational emotional processing 83

Holding Spaces 86

Organizations as holding spaces 88

CHAPTER 7: STUDY 2 METHODS 92

Research Approach 92

Context and Sampling Strategy 94

Data Collection 98

Data Analysis 102

CHAPTER 8: STUDY 2 FINDINGS 112

CHAPTER 9: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS 155

Collective Findings of Dissertation 155

Theoretical contributions to the emotional processing literature 158

Theoretical contribution to the PSOC literature 162
Theoretical contributions to literature on holding environments 164
Practical Implications 169
Limitations and Directions for Future Research 171
Conclusion 175
REFERENCES *177*
TABLES & FIGURES *199*
APPENDIX *211*

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Study 1 Observation Activities 199
Table 2.2: Study 1 Interviews (by rank)... 199
Table 3.1: Interview Participants by Recruitment Strategy 200
Table 3.2: Interview Participants by Geography 200
Table 3.3: Interview Participants by Rank 200
Table 3.4: Interview Participants by Tenure in Law Enforcement............................ 200
Table 3.5: Evidence of PSOC Dimensions in Data 201

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Study 1 Data Structure 203
Figure 2.2: Methods for navigating negative emotions 204
Figure 2.3: Perceived Safety & Effectiveness of Response Methods 205
Figure 2.4: Relational Emotional Processing of Emotions 206
Figure 3.1: Study 2 Data Structure 207
Figure 3.2: Study 2 Process Model A & B 210

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> *I saw horrible things. I charged a father with attempted murder of his six-month-old son. I saw it. I was the first one on-scene. I've seen a mother kill her children by shoving roses down their throats. I've seen a guy burn himself alive...I saw one brother help another brother kill himself. I saw the high school captain of the soccer team kill herself. Not seen, but I was there. I was there. I saw her. You know what I mean? I saw—someone just happened to get in an accident. Yeah, I'm giving him CPR and he's looking at me and he's alive when I get there, and he's dead by the time I leave.   [Carly, Police Officer]*

In certain professions, members are routinely exposed to situations where their life or the life of someone else is on the line (e.g., police work, soldiers in the military, medical doctors, emergency responders, firefighters). Workers in these professions are exposed to traumatic situations routinely over the course of a career, and thus, are likely to experience certain feelings such as sadness, emotional pain, anger, and fear (Jackall, 2007; Maslach, 1982; Molinsky & Margolis, 2005; Van Maanen, 1980) in response to these traumatic events.

While individuals in these professions are likely to *experience* these emotions in response to these events, certain organizational norms will dictate whether or not it is acceptable to *express* these emotions to others at work. Professions supply formal and informal rules to manage the emotional complexities of work by encouraging certain emotional expressions and discouraging or even forbidding others (Ekman, 1973), a reflection of deeply held underlying assumptions about the value of particular emotions (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014). In professions where members face life-and-death situations, these emotional norms will dictate, either through informal socialization to the norms or through explicit descriptions in corporate manuals (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989), the appropriate responses to these situations given cultural beliefs about the utility of certain emotional expressions. For example, medical doctors are encouraged to suppress their emotional response in regards to patient death and tragedy because of a driving assumption that the vulnerable emotions of pain and sadness will make doctors less objective and therefore less capable of performing their job (Halpern, 2001). Police officers are held to the expectation of projecting a professional image as strong, hardened, and emotionally unaffected by their work in response to traumatic events, because expressing anything else is seen as a demonstration of weakness (Harris, 1978; Martin, 1999; Price, 1996; Rawski & Workman-Stark, 2018).

While these professional norms dictate appropriate emotional expressions, they do not necessarily shape or influence the actual felt experience of these life and death situations, creating emotional dissonance (Bakker & Heuven, 2006; Grandey, 2000; Zapf et al., 1999) for members who do feel these contextually forbidden emotions. Thus, while organizations prescribe certain emotional expressions in the face of difficult situations, they do not always reflect the realistic lived experience of all complex situations. This dissonance between the felt emotional experience and the allowable emotional expression has been connected to emotional exhaustion (Abraham, 1998; Morris & Feldman, 1997) and suggests that individuals are left without an outlet for processing these forbidden feelings, leading to incomplete emotional processing (Rachman, 1980; Rachman, 2001) and poor recovery from the event itself (Foa, 1997; Foa et al., 2006).

Through the first study of my dissertation, an inductive qualitative study of life-and-death workers, a unique form of emotional processing presented as an important way for individuals to explore the emotions associated with traumatic events. Emotional processing, "a process whereby emotional disturbances are absorbed, and decline to the extent that other experiences and behaviors can proceed without disruption" (Rachman, 1980, p.51), a critical method for unburdening oneself from the painful emotions associated with traumatic events (Pascual-Leone et al., 2007) such as those occurring routinely in life-and-death work. Extensive literature dating back to Sigmund Freud has demonstrated the deleterious effects associated with a lack of processing emotionally trying events (Freud, 1910) in terms of emotional overload and burnout (Burke, 1993; Grundy, 2000; Lloyd, King, & Chenoweth, 2002; Maslach, 2003; Rowe, 1997; Snibbe et al., 1989), negative health effects (Berry & Pennebaker, 1993) and disorders including post-traumatic stress (Roemer, Litz, Orsillo, & Wagner, 2001). In Rachman's classic paper (1980), he noted that unsuccessful emotional processing leads to "the persistence or return of emotional activities such as obsessions, nightmares, pressure of talk, phobias, inappropriate expression of emotions" (p. 51). At the root of this unsuccessful processing is an inability to express one's authentic emotions in response to difficult or traumatic events (Foa, 1997). In organizations with strict emotional norms such as those that deal with life-and-death situations routinely (Halpern, 2001; Harris, 1978; Martin, 1999; Price, 1996; Rawski & Workman-Stark, 2018), we would expect emotional processing to be both necessary to move past the difficult events but also shaped and possibly constricted by the emotional norms of the organization. In this way, the realities of life-and-death work both exacerbate the need for emotional processing and complicate its enactment. Additionally, while therapeutic methods for processing emotions are readily available to members in these professions, extensive research shows that they are less likely to seek such help from those outside the profession (Coman, 1993; Graf, 1986). Thus, understanding what emotional processing looks like inside organizations is particularly important in life-and-death work contexts.

Organizational scholars have borrowed the concept of emotional processing from clinical psychology literature to suggest it as a way to become unburdened by the emotions elicited by trauma in organizations. In her study of trauma from workplace bullying, Lutgen-Sandvik explained that members had to "process it...work through…and somehow learn to live with it" (2008, p.111). Similarly, in a study of workers in a caregiving organization, it was found that "if they are able to process the trauma, organizations and their members can integrate painful experiences into daily functioning without being disabled (Kahn, 2003, pp. 367). In yet another example, Yang and Mossholder proposed the importance of emotional processing for resolving intragroup conflict (2004). Despite the acknowledged criticality of emotional processing in organizations, what emotional processing encompasses is largely unexplained. This is puzzling considering that research has clearly highlighted the importance of emotional processing following trauma, leaving scholars and practitioners alike without a clear explanation of what that actually means.

Therefore, while there are indications of what constitutes successful emotional processing and unsuccessful emotional processing, and a clear need for emotional processing, what it actually looks like in organizations is largely unexplored. Borrowing from family systems theory, Kahn and colleagues (2013) suggest a relational form of emotional processing for members of an organization following a crisis through storytelling with others, where trauma survivors tell stories of their experiences, thoughts, and feelings associated with a particular traumatic event that affected several members of an organization (Berger & Weiss, 2009; Kahn, Barton & Fellows, 2013; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Storytelling has also been used to powerfully demonstrate difficult experiences of being "different". In her study of a chemical products company's long-term effort to address diversity and change, Bond (2007) used storytelling workshops for members of marginalized groups to share their painful experiences of being different with others at their workplace. As Bond describes, “the benefit is that in sharing one’s experience, it is named; and in having it witnessed by others, it is validated” (2007:114).

This relational emotional processing through storytelling assumes that open, vulnerable, authentic disclosure of emotions is encouraged in organizations. Yet, for many organizational members who work in life-and-death work, open emotional expression is not encouraged, despite routine exposure to potentially emotionally challenging events. For these organizational members, it would seem that successful emotional processing is critical for emotional well-being, but research has not yet explored how members go about this emotional processing without violating what they perceive to be the emotional norms of their organization. This puzzling gap creates an opportunity to contribute to theory on emotional processing of traumatic events in organizations.

This dissertation will build theory of emotional processing in a certain type of organization where the processing of traumatic events is desperately needed and seeks to fill in the missing information in the literature regarding what emotional processing might entail in these organizations. I will take a relational perspective and show how members engage in emotional processing with others. More specifically, I seek to answer the following broad research question: *In the context of organizations that engage in life-and-death work, characterized by traumatic events where the survival of oneself and/or others is at stake, how (if at all) do organizational members process their emotions with others?* While literature has acknowledged that emotional processing is critical for continued functioning and well-being amidst tragedy, trauma, and emotional complexity (Kahn, 2003; Kahn, Barton & Fellows, 2013; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008; Rachman, 1980), this dissertation will explore how organizational members engage in a relational form of emotional processing, the organizational and relational factors that shape it, and its outcomes in a particular type of work context. In this dissertation I am conducting two studies, the first of which details a previously untheorized method for becoming unburdened by emotional pain that emerged through inductive qualitative research – relational emotional processing - which I define as an *enactment whereby individuals re-engage the memory of a traumatic event with trusted others at work, cognitively reappraise the event, and socially affirm the emotional experience associated with the event.* The second study builds on the findings of the first study and explores how relational emotional processing is shaped by two emergent but underexplored findings of study 1: physical space and a psychological sense of community defined as "the perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, and the feelings that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure" (Sarason, 1974: p.157). The findings of study 1 of this dissertation suggest that sense of community and space play a role in relational emotional processing interactions and my second study elaborated the relationship between these organizational constructs.

More specifically, in my first study (Chapters 2-4) I focus on the individual, relational, and organizational factors that influence how workers navigate the experience of traumatic events at work, with particular focus on how members confront these experiences with others at work through relational emotional processing. To answer my broad research question of how members in life-and-death work process the emotions associated with traumatic events with others, I collected ethnographic data – both in-depth interviews and non-participant observation. Iterating between my ethnographic data and theories of emotional processing and emotional display rules in organizations, this study revealed that, bound by strict emotional norms of this particular profession, members and trusted others (in-group/community members) created time and space away from their work duties to informally discussed difficult events in a manner that was deemed safer than alternative more formal strategies for emotional processing. These informal interaction events present opportunities for what I theorize and define as relational emotional processing.

I conducted a second study (Chapters 6-8) to further explore the importance of trusted others and physical space in the experience of relational emotional processing by answering the following questions: *How and in what ways does a psychological sense of community shape relational emotional processing of trauma for members in life-and-death professions? How do organizational members identify and/or create safe spaces for relational emotional processing following traumatic events*? To address these questions, I drew on literature on a psychological sense of community, sense of space/physical place, and holding environments at work to design an inductive qualitative study. In-depth interviews with police officers across the United States served as the basis for the data collection in Study 2. Through my analysis of these interviews, I develop a process of creating and sustaining a PSOC in the absence of an organizational holding environment and show how this PSOC enables a fulfillment of member needs, including the relational emotional processing observed in Study 1.

In this dissertation, professions that I consider to be involved in life-and-death work include, among others, firefighters, emergency responders, 911 call-takers/emergency dispatchers, military soldiers, and police officers. In all of these professions, through the normal course of performing their duties, organizational members are responsible for the life of others, and in some cases, organizational members are themselves in situations where their lives are at stake.

Organization of Dissertation

In Chapter 2, I review relevant literature on emotional processing to build the theoretical foundation for Study 1. I then discuss my methods in Chapter 3 and findings from that study in Chapter 4.

In Chapters 6-8, I present the theoretical foundation, methodology, and findings of Study 2. Chapter 9 summarizes the findings of both studies and details the theoretical contributions and practical implications of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 2: STUDY 1 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Processing of emotions

Negative affective (Feldman Barret & Russell, 1999) experiences such as emotional pain, sadness, anger, and fear are inevitable aspects of organizational life, yet are commonly overlooked by scholars and practitioners alike (Dutton, Workman, & Hardin, 2014; Frost, 2003; Kanov, 2021; Lilius et al., 2008). These negative emotions in organizations can arise from a variety of triggers. Most commonly, research focuses on instances of members bringing the negative emotions associated with events in their personal life into the workplace (Hazen, 2008; Lilius et al., 2008; Lilius et al., 2011). Other literature has explored events that occur at work that can elicit negative emotions such as being mistreated by work colleagues (Cortina et al., 2001; Driver, 2007), caring for sick others (Figley, 1995; Jacobson, 2006; Maslach, 1982), and in the performance of necessary evils such as firing an underperforming employee (Margolis & Molinsky, 2008) or carrying out a downsizing (Clair & Dufresne, 2004). Given these examples, it is clear that negative emotions are not only an inevitable experience for organizational members, they are an inevitable aspect of organizational life, and how organizations and members overcome these emotions have the potential to impact various organizational outcomes.

Negative emotions can also be provoked by traumatic events that occur at work, either through unexpected events such as a mass shooting (Thompson & Lund, 2017) or through the normal course of performing one's work duties in certain professions such as with medical doctors (Sendler et al., 2016), social workers (Boscarino, Figley, & Adams, 2004), firefighters (Woodall, 1997), and police officers (Jackall, 2007). Individuals can become so deeply affected by traumatic events and the associated emotions that their normal routines and functioning are disrupted by intrusive thoughts, nightmares, fears, and sadness (Rachman, 2001), eventually resulting in post-traumatic stress disorder (Soomro & Yanos, 2018; Wilson, Keane, 2004). It is generally assumed that to overcome this trauma and become unburdened by the memory of it, individuals must engage in some form of event "processing" that helps to "interpret traumatic events in personally meaningful terms, integrate threatening or confusing aspects of the experience into a coherent and nonthreatening conceptual framework, and reach a state of emotional acceptance" (Lepore & Helgeson, 1998: p.91).

While literature on trauma and emotions point to several ways to overcome the emotional burden of traumatic events, I will focus on the importance of *emotional processing*, as it inductively emerged as a meaningful way for the informants in my ethnographic fieldwork to feel less burdened by the barrage of traumatic events faced through their career in life-and-death work. Emotional processing has been defined as "a process whereby emotional disturbances are absorbed, and decline to the extent that other experiences and behaviors can proceed without disruption" (Rachman, 1980, p.51). What is puzzling about this definition is its focus on the outcome of the processing, rather than the key steps of the process itself, contradicting the "process" aspect of the definition above. Additionally, most scholars discussing emotional processing still cite Rachman's (1980) definition (Baker et al., 2004; 2012; Teasdale, 1999) including those who developed the psychometric scale for measuring emotional processing (Baker et al., 2007; 2010; Gay et al., 2019). Following this definition, any process that ends with amelioration of emotional disturbances can be deemed emotional processing. Without clear boundaries that establish the existence of one construct as distinct from others are blurry, thus complicating our understanding of the construct and ability to measure it.

Other studies, particularly those outside of the clinical literature, refer to emotional processing often but without regard to a particular definition of what it is or what it is not. This leaves emotional processing, at least definitionally, in an ambiguous area where researchers see evidence of emotional processing, and refer to particular examples of when they think they see emotional processing, but without ever citing a clear model for what emotional processing itself looks like or how it emerges in organizational life. Drawing on examples of emotional processing in my data, I will define emotional processing as *an enacted strategy for becoming unburdened by the negative emotions associated with traumatic events through cognitive and emotional revisiting of the event*. However, I expect that through this dissertation, I will modify this definition to incorporate what exactly constitutes emotional processing in one particular type of work. Specifically, this dissertation will explore the ways individuals engage in emotional processing with others in life-and-death work.

Acknowledging the absence of the actual psychological means through which emotional processing is accomplished in Rachman's (1980) definition (Gay et al., 2019), psychology researchers have built on Rachman's foundational work on emotional processing to describe the mechanisms at work that enable emotional processing. Foa and Kozak (1986) were the first to build theory regarding the two necessary conditions for the reduction of emotional disturbance following trauma, which has been deemed the original emotional processing theory (Pascual-Leone & Greenberg, 2007). The two conditions include 1) the emotion/memory structure must be activated and 2) information incompatible with the elements of the emotion/memory structure must be presented and integrated to replace unreasonable elements with reasonable ones (Rauch & Foa, 2006). I will further detail how psychologists view emotional processing in the *Therapeutic strategies for emotional processing* section below.

Extending beyond clinical interventions, emotional processing is unequivocally described as the critical method for overcoming traumatic events (Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999). In a study of trauma from workplace bullying, Lutgen-Sandvik explained that members had to "process it...work through…and somehow learn to live with it" (2008, p.111). Similarly, in a study of workers in a caregiving organization, it was found that "if they are able to process the trauma, organizations and their members can integrate painful experiences into daily functioning without being disabled (Kahn, 2003, pp. 367). In these scenarios, emotional processing facilitates overcoming the adverse effects associated with persistent negative emotions. However, these studies do not draw on the existing emotional processing literature in psychology, and thus, refer to emotional processing without describing how it is accomplished. This dissertation will build on prior studies and further explicate what emotional processing encompasses – outside of clinical interventions - in a particular type of work - as well as the individual, relational, and organizational influences on it. Specifically, this dissertation connects the organizational literature that acknowledges the importance of emotional processing with the psychology literature on how emotional processing is accomplished. In doing so, I show how an untheorized type of emotional processing unfolds between co-workers, that which I refer to as relational emotional processing.

Following this review of how emotional processing has been defined and what emotional processing may entail, it is also important to consider why emotional processing is so critical following traumatic events. When the emotions associated with traumatic events are not effectively processed, individuals are vulnerable to "the persistence or return of emotional activities such as obsessions, nightmares, pressure of talk, phobias, inappropriate expression of emotions" (Rachman, 1980, p. 51), post-traumatic stress disorder (Litz et al., 1997; Van der Merwe & Hunt, 2019), high levels of avoidance symptoms (Difede & Barocas, 1999; Ting et al., 2005), and poor health outcomes (Amir et al., 1998; Nightingale & Williams, 2000). Finding effective ways to process emotions is especially critical in life-and-death work given the routine nature of exposure to and involvement in traumatic events, making workers in these professions at an increased risk for these negative outcomes.

Research has shown that repeated exposure to hyper-arousal states (like those common in life-and-death work) may result in emotional numbing (Barlow, 1988; Foa & Riggs, 1993). Emotional numbing is a collection of encumbering symptoms involving problems in the experience and expression of emotion (Litz et al., 1997). Emotional numbing is especially likely when individuals have made unsuccessful efforts to address their emotions associated with traumatic events, which results in a “shutting down” of affective responses and presents as numbing symptoms (Foa, Riggs & Gershuny, 1995). Emotional numbing emerged in the findings of this study as one method for navigating the negative emotions associated with traumatic events. However, most individuals talked about emotional numbing as a sort of “cautionary tale” about why it is important to find ways to effectively process emotions.

Emotional numbing, whether conscious or unconscious, is a mechanism to protect oneself from grief, shock, anger, or terror associated with traumatic events (Hesse, 2002). It is indicated by persistent efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings, activities, or people associated with traumatic events (Kintzle et al., 2013). Studies have found that members who are routinely exposed to trauma – whether directly or vicariously through the experience of others - frequently report emotional numbing symptoms. In a study of social workers, avoidance of reminders of client and numbing responses were the most frequently reported symptoms (Bride, Jones, & MacMaster, 2007). Similarly, a study of military health care providers found that many of the providers experience secondary traumatic stress, where the most frequently reported symptom was emotional numbing (Kintzle et al., 2013). A study of physicians found that as doctors were socialized into the norms of emotional detachment, they became increasingly insensitive to their patients' pain (Eron, 1955).

Emotional numbing also includes behaviors that promote numbing including alcohol consumption, overeating, overspending, and overworking (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995). Research has demonstrated that numbing through the use of alcohol and drug use is associated with increased somatic complaints and decreased psychological well-being (Begley, 1998) and an increase in self-reported psychological distress (Tyler & Cushway, 1995). This is likely true because while emotional numbing is used as a defense mechanism in response to traumatic events, the burden of the unprocessed event and the associated negative emotions remain. Emotional numbing, then, represents avoidance of the realities of trauma. In contrast, emotional processing is a way to confront the realities of trauma.

Studies have shown how the persistence of certain negative emotions including sadness, fear, and suffering affects the workplace, as these emotions are likely to distract employees or otherwise complicate the accomplishment of work tasks (Frost, Dutton, Maitlis, Lilius, Kanov & Worline, 2006). Literature has explored the deleterious effects of unprocessed negative emotions in terms of emotional overload and burnout (Maslach, 2003) in various types of work including health care organizations (Rowe, 1997; Snibbe, Radcliffe, Weisberger, Richards & Kelly, 1989), social welfare agencies (Lloyd, King, & Chenoweth, 2002), emergency first responders (Burke, 1993; Grundy, 2000), and within the judicial system (Chamberlain & Miller, 2008). These unprocessed emotions have the potential to cost organizations financially, where job stress and burnout have been estimated to cost organizations hundreds of billions of dollars annually from lost productivity and increased costs of health-related expenses (Butts, 1997). This stress may also disrupt a worker's ability to perform their work task; in life-and-death work, this may result in worker’s inability to effectively serve others and solve the problems they are charged with addressing – issues that may determine whether someone lives or dies (Violanti & Paton, 1999).

Given the high human and organizational cost of unprocessed negative emotions, finding ways for organizational members to process these emotions is critical. Yet, research is less clear on what specifically constitutes emotional processing, specifically in the organizational setting. In fact, most of the organizational literature that refers to emotional processing does so without citing what emotional processing is, ignoring foundational work in psychology that has long acknowledged the theoretical and practical importance of emotional processing. Therefore, it is important to review and connect the disparate literatures on emotional processing to understand what exactly emotional processing is and how it might emerge in organizations. Through my discussion, I will focus on the techniques for overcoming the emotions associated with traumatic events, all of which are applicable to trauma experienced at work.

Intrapersonal emotional processing

***Therapeutic strategies for emotional processing**:* The concept of emotional processing first appeared in the literature in the 1980s in clinical psychology. Foa and Kozak (1986) proposed emotional processing theory (EPT) as a clinical tool to address fear, post-traumatic stress, anxiety and other negative emotions such as pain and sadness. Specifically, EPT is related to how these emotions are represented as memory structures that lead to avoidance behaviors. These memories consist of three types of information: information about the stimulus (event); information regarding the individual’s verbal, behavioral, and physiological response to the event; and the meaning ascribed to the event and the response to the event (Foa & McNally, 1986). Through EPT, the intense emotions tied to particular events can be lessened by modifying the information tied to the memory (Rupp et al., 2017). This new information allows for a decline of the intense emotional experience tied to the memory and a strengthened belief that one is indeed able to overcome the emotion-laden situation (Foa & Kozak, 1986).

In a therapeutic setting, there are several approaches to engage in emotional processing including prolonged exposure therapy (Foa et al., 2006), eye movement desensitization reprocessing (Shapiro, 2017), cognitive processing therapies (Monson, Schnurr, Resick, Friedman, Young-Xu, and Stevens, 2006) and critical incident stress debriefing (Mitchell & Everly, 1997). Across each of these approaches, there are two essential requirements for the clinical intervention to result in successful emotional processing: 1) the emotion-laden memory must be activated such that 2) new information that is incompatible with the original emotion-laden memory can be integrated into the memory structure. Elaborating on an example provided by Rauch and Foa (2006), consider a situation in which a police officer witnessed another police officer's death by gunshot. The next time the surviving police officer sees a gun, even if not in a dangerous situation the gun becomes a stimulus that may lead to irrational behavioral, emotional, and psychological responses such as intense fear, running away or hiding. This is due to a new memory structure attached to the gun that is problematic for a police officer such as "I am going to die". Emotional processing involves returning to the traumatic memory and exposing the police officer to guns in situations where it will not harm them in an attempt to revise the new fear attached to this required tool on their toolbelt. Discussing the event (activating the emotion-laden memory while 2) being presented with the fear-related stimulus (gun) helps adjust the emotion associated with the memory such that the person no longer believes that any time they see a gun, they will die.

Each of the above psychological interventions enable emotional processing to occur. This processing may allow the individual to overcome the painful emotions associated with particular events or stimuli, as the approaches modify both components of what makes up an emotion: physiological arousal and cognitive appraisal of the stimulus/event (Grandey, 2000). For any of these to occur, individuals must seek out and be open to such therapeutic interventions.

Absent clinical interventions, naturally occurring (i.e., not requiring professional support) responses to emotionally evocative events can occur intrapersonally through emotional regulation (Grandey, 2000) and coping (Lazarus, 1966). While neither emotional regulation nor coping are the same as emotional processing, both include enactments similar to the reappraisal aspect of emotional processing as well as other enactments that either preclude the need for emotional processing or that exacerbate it. Next, I will show how each of these strategies is similar to yet distinct from emotional processing.

Emotional Regulation: Emotions literature suggests that individuals are able to regulate their physiological arousal and cognitions in order to experience and express only certain emotions. This is known as emotion regulation and is defined as “the process by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions” (Gross, 1998, p.275). Emotional regulation is proposed to occur at two possible points: antecedent-focused, in which an individual regulates the precursors of emotion, and response-focused, in which an individual modifies the observable signs of emotions (Grandey, 2000).

The first type of emotional regulation, antecedent-focused, can occur in two ways: avoidance or cognitive reappraisal. With avoidance, individuals ostensibly have the choice to avoid certain stimuli or events (Gross, 1998). However, in the context of work, this is unlikely or at the very least complicated given that individuals are required to complete the tasks assigned to them in their role (Grandey, 2000). Alternatively, individuals can focus on cognitive change wherein they confront situations and reappraise or reinterpret them to modify their subjective meaning and therefore alter the impact of the situation (Gross, 1998). For example, flight attendants engage in this type of emotional regulation when they choose to see customers as small children who cannot be held responsible for their difficult behavior (Hochschild, 1983), behavior that without reappraisal may lead the flight attendant to feel undesirable emotions such as anger or frustration. Similarly, Clair and Dufresne (2004) show how downsizing agents distance themselves cognitively (as well as emotionally and behaviorally) to reduce the negative affective experience of carrying out downsizing efforts. To do so, the downsizing agents in their study engaged in three cognitive tactics to reappraise their efforts as less harmful (Clair & Dufresne, 2004). This cognitive reappraisal is similar to the cognitive reframing that occurs in therapeutic emotional processing, as it actively confronts the situation, but is accomplished without outside intervention. Yet, since emotion regulation precludes the experience of becoming burdened by the emotions associated with traumatic events (e.g., antecedent focused), it is not necessarily a method for emotional processing.

The second type of emotional regulation involves modifying the emotion expressed following emotionally-evocative events. For example, police officers are encouraged to suppress their emotions following traumatic events (Lumsden & Black, 2018). If an officer experienced any kind of emotion in response to an event but opted to suppress that emotion, this would be a case of response-focused emotional regulation. The management of emotion in this way has been found to have detrimental outcomes for individuals (Grandey, 2000), especially when individuals resort to emotional numbing strategies as described above (e.g., Foa & Riggs, 1993; Litz et al., 1997).

Coping: Individuals can also learn coping strategies to overcome emotional challenges and particularly the stress associated with these challenges (Matteson & Ivanevich, 1979). Coping involves "cognitive and behavioral efforts to master, reduce, or tolerate the internal and or external demands that are created by stressful transactions" (Folkman, 1984, p. 843). Strategies for coping are viewed as an array of covert and overt behaviors through which an individual actively prevents, alleviates, or responds to stress-inducing situations (McGrath, 1976). While colloquially, people describe coping with a variety of undesirable things, much of the literature on coping focuses on coping with stress (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub, 1989; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Taylor & Stanton, 2007). In this way, emotional processing may be seen as a coping mechanism if a traumatic situation is deemed stressful, as processing includes behaviors aimed at alleviating the emotional burden of traumatic events. However, this is not always true; there are instances where coping strategies do not constitute emotional processing.

Coping strategies fall into several categories: acting on the stressor to modify a particularly stressful situation, avoiding stressful stimuli, cognitive reappraisal of the situation so that it does not seem so stressful, or managing the symptoms of the stress (Latack, 1981). Of these, some represent avoidance behaviors (e.g., avoiding stimuli) while others represent confronting behaviors (e.g, cognitive reappraisal) that attempt to address the source of the problem or positively reinterpret the situation. With avoiding behaviors as a symptom of emotional numbing, these particular coping strategies are not conducive to well-being and instead leave these individuals vulnerable to increased perceived stress (Griffith, Steptoe & Cropley, 1999) and psychological distress (Tyler & Cushway, 1995; Violanti, 1992).

Alternatively, those coping strategies that do actively confront the situation and attempt to alleviate the troubling emotions associated with it promote well-being. Emotional processing is one such coping strategy that promotes well-being. Thus, it seems evident across literatures that navigating emotional challenges at the intrapersonal level involves some attention to the situation itself and cognitive reappraisal or reinterpretation of the event. Intrapersonal emotional processing is one such way to do so, however, as described above, literature has mostly explored how this is accomplished in a therapeutic setting.

Emotional processing with others

In the face of traumatic events at work, emotional processing with others (outside of a therapeutic context) is possible with colleagues at work or with friends and family members. However, research suggests that members in life-and-death work are less likely to seek help and share the details of their traumatic events with those outside of work (Coman, 1993; Graf, 1986). As one military veteran described regarding his relations with his wife after returning from combat, "we ended up being two strangers in the same house. She didn't recognize that I'd come back a different person and that there were a lot of things that I couldn't talk to her about, that I can't talk to her about" (Gerlock, Grimesey, & Sayre, 2014: 350). For those who do attempt to process trauma with friends and family, research has demonstrated that the emotional burden can be contagious (Papazoglou, 2016) and can be absorbed by those with whom the details are shared, leading to negative effects including secondary trauma (Burke, 1993; Miller, 2007). Thus, emotional processing with friends and family outside of work is both dangerous and unlikely, making emotional processing within the organization that much more important in life-and-death work.

In the work context, individuals can also seek to overcome negative emotions through interpersonal interactions with work colleagues. Organizational literature suggests two key relational methods for becoming unburdened from traumatic and painful events: receiving compassion from others (Frost, 1999) and emotional processing with others (Kahn, Barton & Fellows, 2013). I will review each of these relational methods in the sections that follow.

Compassion: In recent years, literature on compassion in organizations has acknowledged the inevitability of human suffering in the context of work (Dutton, Workman, & Hardin, 2014; Lilius et al., 2008; Frost, 2003) and the importance of expressing one's pain and suffering to begin to heal (Hazen, 2008; Lilius et al., 2011). In response to these expressions of pain, compassionate responding from others will help suffering individuals overcome the wounds associated with this emotional pain. Research that specifically explores the actions taken to reduce or remedy a sufferer's pain, known as compassion actions (Atkins & Parker, 2012), acknowledges that acting compassionately can take many forms and involve a breadth of different behaviors (Dutton et al., 2006; Frost et al., 2006). Lilius and colleagues found that showing compassion through giving emotional support to a colleague experiencing emotional pain helps alleviate the pain: "I experienced a devastating loss in my personal life when my husband died, and all of the people I work with were very caring and supportive...their caring helped me get through some extremely difficult times' ' (Lilius et al., 2008, p. 204).

Compassion is a particularly useful response to the pain of others in isolated incidents. However, in the case of more routine exposure to traumatic events, as is the case in life-and-death professions, compassionate responding can lead to compassion fatigue for those who are repeatedly called upon to respond compassionately to others. Compassion fatigue is marked by a reduced capacity or interest in being empathetic or "bearing the suffering" of others and is commonly experienced in the work of first responders to traumatic events (Adams, Boscarino, & Figley, 2006; Figley, 2002). Additionally, members in these professions are often called upon to respond compassionately to others so that it is unlikely they have much capacity for responding compassionately to their coworkers (Figley, 1999; Greinacher et al., 2019; Huggard & Unit, 2013). Therefore, in these professions, compassion may be less available, less effective, less or may even lead to unintended negative consequences.

Emotional processing with others – relational emotional processing: For the sake of this dissertation, I will refer to emotional processing with others as *relational emotional processing* which I define as *an enactment whereby individuals re-engage the memory of a traumatic event with trusted others at work, cognitively reappraise the event, and socially affirm the emotional experience associated with the event.* The outcome of relational emotional processing, similar to emotional process in a therapeutic setting, is that the individual becomes unburdened by the emotions associated with traumatic events.

Borrowing from psychological studies of emotional processing (Pennebaker 1990, 1993, 1997), scholars in organizational studies have proposed emotional processing as another relational method for overcoming the emotional burden associated with traumatic events. Scholars describe that "if they are able to process the trauma, organizations and their members can integrate painful experiences into daily functioning without being disabled (Kahn, 2003, pp. 367) and that members had to "process it...work through…and somehow learn to live with it" (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008, p.111). While these studies are largely silent on what exactly is meant by processing in these situations, other studies have proposed that this processing can be done through talking about traumatic experiences with others at work. In their discussion of organizational crises, Kahn, Barton, and Fellows (2013) described that individuals can experience post-traumatic growth following crisis by telling stories about their experiences and sharing what they thought and felt. Without such storytelling, the negative emotions connected to certain experiences will linger and remain problematic (Herman, 1997). Much of Kahn and colleagues' evidence draws on models of post-traumatic growth (Berger & Weiss, 2009; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004) that explore the ways storytelling about traumatic events can lead to a dulling of the negative felt emotions.

Similarly, in his field study with paramedics, Tangherlini (1998) found that the long tradition of paramedic storytelling "can also be seen as an informal mode of debriefing…cohort storytelling acts as a much-needed outlet for expression of the emotions that arise from seeing people suffer or die" (pp. 211-212). Reflecting on a story told by one informant, he realized that "what has begun as good-natured narration of a memorable call had become an exploration of the emotions produced by a vicious attack on a child and his other" (Tangherlini, 1998: 154). As emergency responders, paramedics are often exposed to traumatic events and thus, storytelling has become an important way for them to explore their emotions and become unburdened by those experiences. In this way, paramedic storytelling seems to be a strategy for relational emotional processing of emotions. Medics even acknowledged the dangers of not sharing their stories, as one paramedic shared a story about another who wasn't able to share his story, and as a result, committed suicide (Tangherlini, 1998).

Storytelling can also be used by large groups to overcome a more collective experience of trauma and the emotions associated with traumatic events. For example, following the murder of a colleague, colleagues engaged in storytelling to collectively process the emotional pain experienced by several organizational members in response to the murder (Garland, 2002). In this way, relational emotional processing through storytelling can be accomplished with many interaction partners at once, as opposed to with just one other person. In the case of life-and-death work, where many individuals are likely to have been involved in a traumatic event or a variety of different traumatic events, this is a particularly valuable way to overcome these events together. In this way, relational emotional processing can parallel certain features of group psychotherapy, in that several people can benefit from the group process simultaneously. This is especially true for groups with high cohesion (Yalom, 1995) as it "enable(s) group members to engage in the necessary self-disclosure and the personal exploration that is the hallmark of effective therapy" (Marmarosh, Holtz & Schottenbauer, 2005: 32). Describing one particular group with whom he worked in group therapy, Yalom described the following:

> They worked together in the group once a week for a year…they shared their deepest feelings; they weathered fierce, vicious battles; they helped each other through suicidal depressions…members go through vital life experiences together, they shed reality-distorting facades and strive to be honest with one another. How many times have I hear a group member say, "This is the first time I have ever told this to anyone"? The group members are not strangers. Quite the contrary: they know one another deeply and fully.

While relational emotional processing lacks the therapist that is present in group therapy, it is clear that there is power in the group interacting and sharing their stories, assuming the group can find a way to share these stories with one another. Such was the case for residents of a midwestern city of the U.S. who found that naming their trauma and its effects with one another lead to a mutual process of self-healing and healing of the community (Mueller et al., 2021).

Trauma in context: Emotional processing of traumatic events in life-and-death work

Taken together, these strategies for overcoming painful emotions are powerful tools for emotional processing. However, much of the literature reviewed thus far on overcoming trauma does not consider the broader social and organizational context that will influence whether and how these strategies may be enacted at work. Yet, the social context will likely shape whether and how individuals choose to process their emotions, in ways external to the organizations (either through therapy or with friends/family) and internally with colleagues. In the sections that follow, I will review key literature on trauma and emotions in life-and-death work and demonstrate the ways this type of work may shape emotional experiences following traumatic events, methods for navigating these experiences including emotional processing, building to the central theoretical puzzle of this study regarding emotional processing in this context.

I chose to explore emotional processing in life-and-death work because members in these professions are exposed to traumatic events more often (Litz, 2007; Martin et al., 2009; Pinto et al., 2015; Stephens, Long, & Miller, 1997) than in other professions. Given this increased exposure to trauma, life-and-death work provides a rich context in which to explore how individuals navigate the emotional challenges associated with traumatic events.

Life-and-death work and emotional norms: Extensive literature has demonstrated that across life-and-death professions, members are expected to present as emotionally detached and unaffected, regardless of one's inner emotional experience regarding traumatic events. This expectation of emotional detachment includes emotions such as sadness (Price, 1996), fear (Chetkovich, 1997), or distress (Mahalik, Good & Englar-Carlson, 2003). In police work, for example, the work of is associated with danger, bravery and the catching of criminals, leading to expectations that police officers only express physical prowess, courage, and aggression (Martin, 1999). Expressing negative emotions following trauma is essentially forbidden in this work, as police are seen as unfit if they express such emotions, potentially leading to a removal of their right to their gun and badge (Harris, 1978; Martin, 1999; Pogrebin & Poole, 1991; Pogrebin et al., 1995). Similar emotional norms have been demonstrated in the medical profession where medical doctors are encouraged to practice detached concern, expressing care and concern for their patients without becoming emotionally affected themselves (Halpern, 2001). When doctors do show emotion, it is perceived as a weakness (Coulehan & Williams, 2003) and may even deem the doctor incompetent (Crowe & Brugha, 2018; Smith & Kleinman, 1989). As I will demonstrate in Study 2, however, there are organizations that do not adhere to these constricting emotional norms, but they are the exception rather than the rule. Therefore, I maintain my focus on those organizations who are bound by these constricting emotional norms.

Regardless of norms discouraging open expression of emotions following traumatic events, other evidence suggests that members in these professions do experience negative emotions following these events. For example, many scholars have demonstrated that police do become quite emotionally involved in cases. For example, "the still unsolved murder of a to-this-day unidentified four-year-old girl, sexually violated, stuffed into a picnic cooler, and abandoned at a construction site in sizzling July, triggers the deepest paternal grief" (Jackall, 2007, p.229) for many officers involved in the case. In another case, a homicide detective suffered psychological impairment after being involved in a traumatic event:

> I shot and killed a man. I have problems with it. I dream about it. I have flashbacks. I'm afraid to go back on the street. I'm not sure what I'll do. I don't want anyone to kill me…One officer told me to just remember that the guy I killed was an SOB and no good. Then, take a couple of drinks and forget it. I don't drink…I did what I was trained to do. I got hurt doing it. (Van Maanen, 1980: p.155).

For these members who are experiencing forbidden negative emotions, research suggests three common ways that workers in life-and-death professions navigate the negative emotions associated with traumatic events: through emotional management (e.g., suppression/numbing), seeking help outside of work, or through social support at work. I will briefly review each of these below to demonstrate the criticality of social support and its link to emotional processing.

Life-and-death work and emotional management: Due to the repeated nature of traumatic events, many police officers (and other life-and-death workers) fall victim to negative outcomes when trying to uphold this ideal of being unaffected (Gordon, 1981; Velasquez & Hernandez, 2019). Through routine emotional management in the form of suppression, many life-and-death workers resort to emotional numbing (Pasciak & Kelley, 2013). As previously described, the negative effects of emotional suppression can be devastating and can result in post-traumatic stress disorder and even suicide (Anshel, 2000; Bakker & Heuven, 2006; Bonifacio, 1991; Carlier et al., 1996; Gersons, 1989; Robinson, Sigman, & Wilson, 1997; Van Gelderen et al., 2011; Violanti et al., 2015). Additionally, emotional suppression and numbing in life-and-death work has been found to lead to other destructive behaviors including drug and alcohol abuse, often described as a mechanism to further numb the emotions associated with their work (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995). Thus, while this has been shown to be a common coping mechanism for life-and-death workers, it does not promote well-being and emotional unburdening following traumatic events.

Life-and-death work and navigating trauma outside of work: As an alternative to emotional management, members in life-and-death work can also confront their emotional reality through emotional processing outside of work in formal therapy. For emotional processing to occur in a therapeutic setting, individuals must be willing to engage in the therapy; that is, this type of intervention must be sought out and does not naturally occur. While seeking professional help for emotional and mental health has seen an increase in acceptance in the general population (American Psychological Association, 2019), certain individuals still face the risk of stigma within the workplace if they choose to seek outside counsel for emotional and mental health, creating barriers to employing this strategy for emotional processing. Research has shown this to be especially true in life-and-death work contexts. In an extensive review of the literature on barriers to seeking mental health support in the military, Sharp and colleagues (2015) found that 60% of military officers who experienced mental health problems did not seek help given the stigma. Similar findings have been demonstrated in police work (Hansson & Markstrom, 2014; Keenan, Royle, & Farrell, 2009) and other life-and-death professions (Hom et al., 2018; Tangherlini, 1998). In a national study of police mental health in the US, researchers found that over 90% of the officers perceive stigma as negatively influencing help-seeking behaviors (Drew & Martin, 2021). Thus, while therapeutic emotional processing outside of work is possible, there is significant evidence to suggest that members engaged in life-and-death work are unlikely to seek help from outsiders (e.g., Coman, 1993; Graf, 1986). Therefore, to avoid the stigma associated with therapeutic emotional processing, life-and-death workers must find other ways to navigate the emotions associated with traumatic events.

Emotional processing can also occur more naturally outside of work with friends and family. However, as previously described, members in life-and-death work are less likely to seek help and share the details of their traumatic events with those outside of work (Coman, 1993; Graf, 1986). Thus, processing outside of work and emotional management seem to be either ineffectual and potentially destructive or unlikely for members in life-and-death work.

Life-and-death work and navigating trauma with others at work: For members in life-and-death work who do experience the dissonance associated with felt forbidden emotions following traumatic events, an alternative to emotional numbing or emotional processing outside of work is to seek social support from work colleagues (Stephens et al., 1997). While social support can come from anyone – friends, family, colleagues, and even the family pet (Allen, Blascovich, &Mendes, 2002) - Graf (1986) posited that peers are the most important source of social support for many workers in life-and-death professions. Similarly, extensive literature on stress and burnout suggest the importance of other people at work as a source of support for combating the deleterious effects of trauma (Flannery, 1990; Kaniasty, 2012; Michalopoulos &

Aparicio, 2012; Regehr et al., 2003; Stephens et al., 1997). In these studies, social support is often ill-defined as "actual receipt of help" (Kaniasty, 2012: 22), "when people feel supported and valued" (Regehr et al., 2003) or not at all (Michalopoulos & Aparicio, 2012; Stephens et al., 1997). Social support is measured in these studies using several different psychometric tests, without consistency, further confusing what is meant by social support. This is likely the case because social support is a term that has been broadly used across various literatures to cover many types of helping behaviors (for a full review, see Taylor 2011). In Taylor's 2011 review, social support is broadly defined as "the perception or experience that one is loved and cared for by others, esteemed and valued, and part of a social network of mutual assistance and obligations" (Taylor, 2011: 190). Narrowing on this broad definition, Stephens and colleagues (1997) do suggest that in response to trauma,

> It would be useful to isolate the coping functions of social support that are specifically related to the needs elicited by the experience of trauma. The coping ability that would be supportive in the case of trauma is apparently the need to talk about the experience and to express the emotions connected with it (304).

Thus, social support following trauma manifests in a network of relationships that create space for talking about the emotions associated with traumatic events. Burke's (1993) study of police officers supports this claim, finding that officers who talked things over with others reported lower levels of alcohol use (i.e., numbing behavior) and distress following trauma.

In this way, social support that enables talking with others about a traumatic event parallels what has been described above as relational emotional processing through talking about their experiences with others (e.g., Kahn, Barton, & Fellows, 2013), as "verbalizing the contextual elements of the trauma is the essence of the treatment" (Van der Kolk, 1988: 286). While the studies described above (***Relational Emotional Processing*** section) were silent on what factors enable or constrain discussion of traumatic events, literature on life-and-death work is clear that a socially supportive environment enhances recovery from trauma through the open discussion (Foa, Steketee & Rothbaum, 1989). For example, a study of Vietnam veterans in the U.S. suggested the need to openly discuss their combat experiences in a nonjudgmental atmosphere to become unburdened by their traumatic experiences (Frye & Stockton, 1982). This nonjudgmental atmosphere, described above as a socially supportive environment, seems to be critical for enabling these relational emotional processing conversations to occur. Yet, we know very little about how this form of emotional processing emerges in life-and-death work, and specifically, what factors shape its enactment. In their study of unspeakable emotions in police work, Howard and colleagues (2000) suggest that where and to whom emotions are disclosed matter, but without theorizing about how and in what ways these conditions matter. Taken together, we know that organizational members do find ways to talk about their traumatic experiences with others and that these interactions lead to positive outcomes. However, we still do not have an understanding of how this processing occurs, particularly amidst the strict emotional norms of life-and-death work. This dissertation seeks to build theory in this area by fusing research on emotional processing theory (Foa & Kozak, 1986; Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999; Rachman, 1980) with organizational research suggesting the importance of talking about traumatic events with others, particularly in life-and-death professions, to answer the research question:

> **RQ1:** In the context of organizations that engage in life-and-death work, characterized by traumatic events where the survival of oneself and/or others is at stake, how, if at all, do organizational members process their emotions with others?

Through my qualitative inductive study of a police department, this study shows how an untheorized type of emotional processing unfolds between coworkers, that which I refer to as relational emotional processing, and the implication for organizational members.

CHAPTER 3: STUDY 1 METHODS

Research Approach

To explore what enables organizational members to process their emotions with others, despite being held to strict emotional norms, I conducted an inductive qualitative study. My guiding research question was quite broad as I was interested in exploring the lived experience of difficult events and the ways the organization shaped these experiences through emotional norms.

Given my guiding research question, I pursued an induction-driven research design. Through a collection of qualitative ethnographic data, this approach allowed me to unpack the complex processes underlying the ways members in certain professions navigate difficult experiences, both alone and with others - processes that are less accessible through quantitative data (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Furthermore, in situations where theory is limited and the goals is to build and elaborate theory rather than test theory, as is the case with literature on what actually constitutes emotional processing outside of psychotherapeutic literature and beyond merely storytelling (e.g., Kahn, Barton, & Fellows, 2013), inductive research is most appropriate (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Context and Sampling Strategy

To explore this broad research question, I was concerned with 1) finding a context where organizational members are expected to be exposed to traumatic or otherwise distressing situations through the natural course of performing their duties, and 2) within an organization where emotional norms dictate the ways members are expected to react to these situations. This purposeful sampling (Locke, 2001) provided a more transparent view of the dynamics of theoretical interest (Yin, 2003) for this study. Through careful consideration of professions that met these two criteria, I chose to study emergency dispatchers and police officers in a large private police department. This site presents two key advantages from a theoretical perspective. First, I found that emergency dispatchers (those who answer emergency calls – "911") and police officers have frequently reported experiencing pain and suffering akin to post-traumatic stress due to the often-traumatic nature of their work which takes a significant emotional toll on these individuals (Maia et al., 2007; Martin et al., 1986; Marmar et al., 2006).

A second reason that a police department is an ideal setting for this study is that many organizational scholars have studied law enforcement settings to explore norms of police work (e.g., Cockcroft, 2005; Hofstede, 1998; Paoline, 2003; Van Maanen, 1973; 1975; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Given my interest in exploring how an organization's emotional norms shape the experience of traumatic or distressing events, I needed to find an organization with a strong and discernable culture. Held to the expectation of embodying the display rules in line with the "ethic of masculinity" (Harris, 1978: p.288), police officers must project a professional image as strong, hardened, and unaffected by their work. However, evidence suggests that police do become quite emotionally involved in their work, and do experience pain and suffering as a direct result of their work (Jackall, 2007; Van Maanen, 1980). Therefore, a police department provided an information rich setting to explore the experience of difficult events (Locke, 2001).

Global Police Department (GPD) [pseudonym] is a private law enforcement agency whose police officers are the first responders to all emergency situations in a major metropolitan area. GPD has 50 state-trained and deputized police officers who have completed the same rigorous police academy as municipal police officers. GPD officers are empowered by the State to enforce criminal law and make arrests. While some officers have worked for GPD their entire law enforcement career, many officers have transferred to GPD from state, municipal, or other private police departments. The work for GPD police officers can be stressful and often exposes them to traumatic events. The police who respond are typically the first to see the victim, the crime scene, or to intervene in an ongoing crisis.

GPD housed its own emergency call center. The dispatchers in the call center are civilians (not police officers) trained in emergency call-taking, dispatching relevant response teams (emergency medical service, fire, paramedics, etc.), and coordinating with other law enforcement agencies in the city. One or two dispatchers would work on each of the three daily shifts at GPD.

Data Collection & Field Relations

I collected two primary sources of data: 1) nearly 500 hours of observation over nine months and 2) 44 in-depth ethnographic interviews. Using two distinct data sources "provide different vantage points, as it were, from which to understand" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; p.65) the studied phenomenon. Conducting fieldwork over such an extensive period of time allowed me sufficient access to "appreciate the norms, practices, and values, official and unofficial alike, which characterize the research setting" (Watson, 2011). The ethnographic approach used helps to capture the "complexity, intricacy, and mundaneity (commonplace activities) of organizational life" (Cunliffe, 2010: 229) through "thick" descriptions which is "important in establishing the validity of ethnographic texts" (Cunliffe, 2010: 231).

I spent considerable time at the GPD before conducting formal interviews to build the necessary rapport with potential informants (Rosen, 1991; Seidman, 1998). During this time, I conducted unobtrusive non-participant observations (Webb & Weick, 1979) at the police department. I went on ride-alongs with police officers, spent shifts observing in the emergency dispatch room, observed department meetings and attended various police training sessions (see Table 2.1). This was an intentional and intensive effort to get to know all personnel of the department throughout my time in the field and demonstrate my commitment to the department. Similar to Pogrebin and Poole's (1991) description of their field relation efforts, I sought to earn the respect of GPD personnel through my personal commitment of time and energy in the department - including committing to third-shift hours, from 11:30pm – 7:30am. I also worked to gain their trust (Spradley, 1979). This was especially important given the state of policing in the U.S. at the time of my fieldwork, as the public's confidence in police was waning following several high-profile incidents of police shooting and killing black men including Philando Castile and Alton Sterling (Holmes. 2016)[1].

In my first few days at the department, everyone was wary of spending time with me. As an outsider, I posed a threat, as many officers felt that there was a "war on police being waged by the news media and President Obama" (Field Notes). My self-reported description of my role as an impartial researcher was meaningless. About two weeks into my field work, one of the sergeants referred to me as the department's "embedded reporter", and suggested that I was there to share "the real story of policing" (Field Notes). Embedded reporters are journalists who are attached to and under the control of military units involved in armed conflicts (Britannica). While this clearly was not my actual role, it seemed to grant me certain privileges and trust. From their perspective, I became an insider – a trusted confidant who was on their side. Although I myself never told anyone I was an embedded reporter, I allowed others to continue introducing me in this way. Given the opportunity, I would always provide a more accurate description of my role as researcher.

Over time, my presence in the department became taken for granted (Pogrebin & Poole, 1991). I was given the secure access code to gain entry to the station. I could come and go as I pleased, without scheduling observation time with anyone. I was included in certain department emails. At roll call for whichever shift I was observing that day, I would be assigned to a particular officer or officers for the shift by the shift sergeant. It had become routine. I was even invited to (and attended) social gatherings outside of work – after-shift drinks at the local bar, a 5k road race with a few of the officers, and a department-wide pig roast. The camaraderie I developed with many of the GPD personnel was crucial as I progressed in my field work to collect in-depth interviews. Developing this degree of rapport invited more vulnerable and open conversations with my informants about the traumatic events they had experienced and the ways they navigated these experiences.

---

[1] It has since fallen to a new low, in the summer of 2020, following the death of George Floyd (Andrew, 2020)

This rapport and closeness I developed went two ways – I too felt close to my informants. This is a common phenomenon in fieldwork. As renowned police ethnographer John Van Maanen described,

> Fieldwork is the messy business of trying to get deep within the everyday lives of those studied such that one can begin to feel the pressures others face. It means subjecting the self – mind and body – to the set of petty-to-grand contingencies others cope with so that one can penetrate and appreciate their response to particular social situations. (2010, p:339).

As a qualitative researcher, I was taught to maintain professional distance between myself and my informants (Adler & Adler, 1987), but inevitably, the sheer amount of time I spent with members of the GPD, and the trials we faced through this time, I came to “appreciate their response”, as Van Maanen said, to the traumatic events they face. While never going completely “native” (Yanow, 2009), I did find myself experiencing a deep level of compassion for the unique challenges police officers face, especially for those who truly believe they are “helpers being cast as executioners” (Field Notes).

I relied on three key tactics to maintain compassion and closeness with my informants while also representing the data with limited bias with authenticity. First, while in the field, I maintained close contact with an academic mentor. I sent weekly emails to my mentor to share what I was experiencing in my time observing. This mentor then reflected back from his perspective, which often times represented a clearer ‘outsider’ perspective than my own. This was an important process for teasing out my own assumptions and biases that were influenced through my time at the GPD.

Second, I engaged in my own emotional processing with my peers. For example, during a week observing with the detective unit, I was surprised to be shown a close-up image of a suicide victim. I was angry with the detective for not asking my permission to be shown this graphic image. I wanted to stop my fieldwork – it felt like too much. Even today I remember the victim’s lifeless eyes from the photograph. Through processing this event with my peers who were engaged in fieldwork of their own, I was reminded of the importance of my work. The detective who showed me that photo was likely trying to connect with me – to share his grief and possible even process his grief. This was a pivotal moment for me. I was reminded that these are real human beings facing incredibly difficult situations and emotional experiences with very little (if any) tools for handling these emotions. I gained a respect not only for their work but for however they choose to cope with the realities of their work.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, is a welcoming of time. Patience has been a critical tactic for maintaining a balance between the compassion and closeness I felt with “my guys” at the GPD and authentically representing my experiences with them – the good and the bad. At the time of this dissertation writing, several years have passed since my time in the field with the GPD. With time comes clarity – a clarity that does not take away from the respect and compassion I have for my informants at the GPD.

While one purpose of my extensive field observation was to establish trust with my informants (Spradley, 1979) it was also a powerful source of incident-related questions for future interviews (Whyte, 1984). In this way, my observations helped to inform the structure of my data gathering. Additionally, observations were a source of information regarding the actual interactions between the employees at the GPD (Whyte, 1984) and the general way of life at the department (Spradley, 1980). This was critical in observing the ways members reacted to difficult events and the ways they talked about these events with their colleagues.

[INSERT TABLE 2.1 HERE]

During my time observing, I took copious field notes, making descriptive observations (Spradley, 1980). My observation data provided a clearer picture of the lived experience in a life-and-death work context and provided new questions to be addressed in subsequent interviews with informants.

Several months into my time with the GPD, I began conducting semi-structured interviews with members of the department. With just over 50 state-trained officers and ten dispatchers, my initial goal was to interview every single officer and dispatcher in the department. However, given the content of my interviews and my desire to discuss emotional topics, building rapport with informants was a crucial precursor to a quality in-depth interview. Therefore, I chose interview participants based on my qualitative assessment of our rapport built over time. Specifically, I never asked anyone for an interview if I did not feel we had spent enough time together to be comfortable talking about trauma and emotions. For example, there were two patrolmen who said they preferred I not observe them. I never approached these officers for an interview either.

I chose to interview various dispatchers and ranking officers within the department: patrolmen, detectives, sergeants, and command staff. While rank is not an ideal proxy for tenure in this setting, it is a reasonable measure of time spent in police work. Given the qualitative nature of this study, I was not controlling for demographics in my sample. However, I did try to observe and interview across demographic differences to capture any variance that might exists. My sample was 20% female, which reflects 82% of all female dispatchers and police officers in the department. While I did not ask my informants about race, all of my informants appeared to be White (non-Hispanic). At the time of my fieldwork, the GPD had one African-American officer and he chose not to participate in this study.

I conducted interviews both onsite at the GPD and off-site. Interviews with police officers were mainly held off-site, given the natural daily routines of police officers. In a normal day, police officers report to the station at the beginning of their shift to attend “roll call”, where they are told any announcements and updated on any ongoing cases or things to look out for on their shift that day. After roll call, the officers are expected to head out on their patrols. Aside from bathroom breaks, meal times, booking prisoners and report writing, the officers are not expected to be at the station for the remainder of their eight-hour shift. Given this dynamic, most of my interviews were conducted while on patrol with the officers. This was also a more natural way to conduct the interviews, as many of the officers were already comfortable spending time with me on ride-alongs from my time observing. Interviews lasted approximately one hour on average.

While most of the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, seven informants requested that the interview not be audio recorded. In these cases, I took extensive notes during the interview, trying best to capture verbatim quotes and native language of the participant (Spradley, 1979), and elaborating these notes into transcripts within two days of the interview.

The interview guide (see Appendix I) for the interviews with the GPD personnel had three main sections: difficult events in police/emergency response work, emotional norms regarding difficult events, and supportive interactions with others at work in response to difficult events. The interview guide, as well as my selection of interviewees changed over the course of the study, given the theoretical sampling technique used in grounded theory analysis (Eisendardt, 1989; Locke, 2001). In this way, I adjusted the structure of the data gathering by asking new questions that I learned were important while in the field. My questions changed during the process of research to reflect my increased understanding of the guiding research question (Creswell, 1998). For example, I learned through my time in the field that anger was a particularly frequent emotional expression at GPD. Once I realized this, I asked informants specifically about the functions of frequent expressions of anger. In total, I collected 44 semi-structured interviews with various members of the department (see Table 2.2).

[INSERT TABLE 2.2 HERE]

Data Analysis

I analyzed my data using the techniques of grounded theory building (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These methods are best used to investigate an unknown phenomenon and to advance our understanding of existing theoretical perspectives (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This study is well suited to the grounded theory strategy given my goal to shed light on the emotional experience of routinely traumatic work and to build new theory around how members navigate these experiences in such contexts. Data analysis occurred in three distinct phases.

Phase 1: Analyzing patterns and open coding. Phase 1 of my analysis began concurrently with my time in the field. During this time, I used grounded theory techniques (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to analyze my field notes and interview transcripts and in an iterative fashion. In this way, I moved back and forth between my data and an emerging configuration of themes to understand what I was experiencing (Locke, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A set of general questions (How do people support each other in traumatic work environments? Do they experience emotional challenges?) guided my research, but as I moved through the data, I was open to adjusting these questions and emergent coding categories based on my interpretations of the data. Using ATLAS.ti, I used in-vivo codes to name what was happening in the data using my informants' own words which allowed me to stay close to my informants' native language and avoid abstracting to conceptual categories too early. These in-vivo codes provide rich detail regarding the lived-experience following traumatic events for individuals engaged in life-and-death work.

Phase 2: Moving toward theoretical categories. I worked from these inductive preliminary open codes based on my emergent themes in my field notes and interview transcripts to develop potential explanations for the patterns I was seeing in my data. I realized that there were patterns emerging in my data that I did not expect. For instance, I found that members created time and space away from the department and separate from work tasks to connect with certain trusted others and discuss particularly challenging events. In addition, where I would expect to see sadness, pain, and fear from the police officers, I instead observed either repeated rehashing of the details of an event absent any emotion or alternatively, shared expressions of anger between colleagues. This observation and other emergent themes led me to further explore what was happening in these social interactions following difficult events. I then proceeded to review existing literature looking for concepts and frameworks that could help explain what was emerging in my data. Following this review of literature, I identified theoretical groupings of the preliminary codes that I observed in my data. For example, the variety of possible responses members described in response their experience of emotional pain led me to review contemporary research on negative emotions and overcoming trauma. This literature led me to group certain in-vivo codes as emotional numbing (Kintzle et al., 2103) and others as variations on emotional processing (Rachman, 2001).

As I progressed through this phase of analysis, it became evident that there was something quite different between the police and the dispatchers regarding my research question. In particular, it was clear that police officers (across ranks; including detectives) created time and space away from the department to engage in relational emotional processing with certain other colleagues. Dispatchers are precluded from engaging in this type of activity, as they do not have the freedom to leave their desk aside from brief bathroom or meal breaks. Additionally, while there are frequently two dispatchers working at once, it is rare that they are alone, as the dispatch area was frequently used by other GPD personnel as a break room or lounge, given the presence of TVs and snacks. This frequent traffic and lack of privacy inhibit relational emotional processing encounters, as I will detail in the Findings. Therefore, I shifted the focus of my data collection and analysis more directly on the police officers (across ranks). However, observations of and interviews with dispatchers[2] contributed to my overall understanding of the GPD and thus, these data are relevant to the findings of this study.

---

[2] I do not explore dispatcher emotional processing separately in my findings, as I did not have enough dispatcher-specific data to draw conclusions. However, it seemed that dispatchers at GPD engaged in gallows

Phase 3: Aggregating theoretical arguments. With these broad theoretical categories capturing the main themes of my data, I began to analyze the relationships between the categories to understand the framework of the categories; that is, what is the story that these categories have to tell about how members navigate traumatic work events. I found that members experienced various negative emotional triggers following either direct or vicarious (Jenkins & Baird, 2002) exposure to trauma. In response, members reported four possible methods for navigating these experiences. While members reported four possible options, each option was described as more or less likely based on perceived emotional norms and shared perceptions around the safety and efficacy of each method. As a result of these safety and efficacy perceptions which relied heavily on the perceived emotional norms of the organization, one method emerged as particularly useful in this context: the enactment of what I call relational emotional processing. This method emerged as particularly useful to my informants measured both by sheer extent of its use and also by the positive outcomes informants attribute to relational emotional processing. Drawing on research on emotional processing (Rachman, 2001), I found that members enacted a previously undertheorized adaptive form of emotional processing with trusted others as a way to become unburdened by their negative emotions. This enactment involves re-engaging with the traumatic event, cognitively reappraising the event, and receiving social affirmation of one's emotional experience. To do so, I observed that members created time, space, and social boundaries to establish a bounded safe environment for enactment of relational emotional processing. These boundaries are what make this method so crucial for navigating emotional experiences because they create a sense of safety to feel authentically and move through those feelings rather than suppress them – in a way acting outside of the emotional norms of the department without fear of retribution. Doing so led to three

---

humor, which I will explore in Study 2 is a way to deflect the emotional experiences and conform to emotional norms that encourage suppression.

positive outcomes for members in life-and-death work, including a decreased emotional burden associated with particular triggering events. For transparency, I present my coding in **Figure 2.1**. This figure illustrates how I moved from open coding to key themes and finally to more theoretical categories. Although the diagram suggests linearity, my data analysis process was iterative, as I engaged in constant comparison between my data, the literature, and my emerging and developing conceptualization of the data. This analysis created the basis for the relational emotional process model and supporting frameworks presented in the following section.

[INSERT FIGURE 2.1 HERE]

CHAPTER 4: STUDY 1 FINDINGS

The findings of this study indicate that in a context in which individuals are regularly exposed both directly and vicariously to traumatic events, four common methods for responding to the negative emotions associated with trauma emerged in my data: 1) avoiding emotional processing altogether 2) processing emotions with those outside of work (formally or informally), 3) formally processing emotions at work, or 4) processing emotions informally with trusted others at work which I refer to as relational emotional processing, as seen in **Figure 2.2**. When deciding between these methods for dealing with their negative emotions, GPD members reported relying on perceived safety and efficacy assessments of each method to determine which method was most appropriate for them. Regarding safety, members reported concerns regarding the perceived emotional norms of police work and how engaging in each method could potentially violate those norms and thus, damage their reputation at work. Regarding efficacy, members shared perceptions regarding the efficacy of each method for overcoming the emotional burden of traumatic events. Drawing on these perceived safety and efficacy assessments regarding each possible method, members most often reported engaging in the fourth method, informal processing with others. Findings from this study suggest that these informal processing interactions with others are a crucial method for processing the emotional realities of this kind of work without violating the deeply embedded emotional norms of police work. In the following sections, I will unpack these findings, as seen in **Figures 2.2-2.4**, and show how these findings contribute to an understanding of the ways members in life-and-death work enact relational emotional processing, a previously untheorized method for overcoming the emotional burden of routinely traumatic work[3].

[INSERT FIGURE 2.2 HERE]

Negative Emotion Triggers at work

On any given day, a GPD patrol officer might not respond to a single call during an entire shift. However, the reality for any police officer is that on any given day, they must also be willing and ready to put their own lives on the line to save others. Thus, traumatic events are typically infrequent in nature but are highly evocative when they occur. During my time with the GPD, officers were called to a student found unresponsive at a party; dead bodies found in the local river; a bomb threat with a hostage situation; a student struck and killed by a train; an officer-involved-shooting; a rape that occurred in a nearby university dorm; and countless shooting and stabbing victims. As one officer described,

> It's not normal or what the world perceives as normal…somebody getting run over by a trolley and seeing their brain matter everywhere, and their body split in two, compared to an overdose, or just havin' Joe Citizen drop and havin' to give CPR, and whether they live or die in front of you. That's what cops deal with. (1039)

The officers acknowledge that police work is beyond the norm of what is expected of most people, given the nature of life-and-death work. In this type of work, organizational members are at times responsible for the life of others, exposed to gruesome or tragic scenes, and are themselves put in dangerous situations where their own life is at stake. Additionally, officers also described traumatic events that happened to other officers – both within their same department or at another law enforcement agency. Regardless of not being directly involved in these events, officers reported that these events serve as constant reminders of the realities of life-and-death work, and thus, elicited strong emotional reactions. In this way, my informants reported two distinct negative emotional triggers at GPD: *directly experienced traumatic events* and *vicariously experienced traumatic events*.

---

[3] In the quotes throughout, all names have been changed to pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of my informants. In certain situations, I slightly altered pieces of some quotes, without altering the meaning, to further protect anonymity.

Directly experienced traumatic events: With each interaction on the job comes the potential for further direct exposure to traumatic events. Officers never know what a particular call might entail. Reflecting back on a less than ten-year career in police work, one officer shared,

> I saw horrible things. I charged a father with attempted murder of his six-month-old son. I saw it. I was the first one on-scene. I've seen a mother kill her children by shoving roses down their throats. I've seen a guy burn himself alive. I saw a son—I saw one brother help another brother kill himself. I saw the high school captain of the soccer team kill herself. Not seen, but I was there. I was there. I saw her. You know what I mean? I saw—someone just happened to get in an accident. Yeah, I'm giving him CPR and he's looking at me and he's alive when I get there, and he's dead by the time I leave. Like, you see child porn. Little kids getting raped and the guy has it on film. This town representative was goin' over to India and he was videoing himself raping children as young as four. To see the kids screaming on the bed and crying as he's raping them. (1014)

Another officer described a particularly challenging duty: "Oh, yeah. I was there with the dead body for about four hours. I came out, and the stench permeates your clothes. I went back, wrote my report, and says, "Hey, captain, I'm goin' home. I'm pretty sure I'm a little fed up with bein' around a dead guy all morning" (1007).

Difficult events extend beyond the scenes that they happen upon or the calls they are assigned. Police officers and more specifically police detectives are often called upon to deliver terrible news to family members:

> The worst thing I ever have done is notifications. Those suck. The hardest thing I ever did, more than once, three of 'em, to tell the parent that their kid is dead. They look at you…I don't wish that on anybody. (1035)

These traumatic scenes and involvement in these tragic events hit close to home for many of the officers who find themselves relating the events to their own families. Relating in this way leads to feelings of empathy, distress, and sadness:

> I've taken a few calls for rapes, sexual assaults. It's sad. They are disturbing to me. We talked earlier about I have a daughter, so I can associate it with someone. Not that I need to. We all have a mother, a sister, a daughter, but I don't like those calls. I get stressed, because I also want to make sure that I'm letting the person know that I can emphasize and sympathize with their situation; but at the same time, I've got to get the information. (1033)

The same was true for a detective who described being affected by a suicide that the GPD responded to:

> We may respond to a suicide. That's something that's tough for me to wrap my mind around, especially someone so young and promising. Having little kids myself, I try to think, is there something, as a parent, that I have to guard against to make sure that I'm not putting too much pressure on my kids? You know what I mean? It plays a little bit of a mind game with you. You know what I mean? It stays with you in a couple of ways, (A) seeing a young lady or a young man that decides that they've had enough. You know what I mean? You try to put yourself in that person's mind, and you say, "Why?" and, "Where could it have changed for that person? Was it the parents?" I guess it causes you to reflect and think, like how could someone do that? (1036)

Vicariously experienced traumatic events: In addition to being directly involved in traumatic events, GPD officers often reported emotional challenges to events that befell fellow officers at the GPD or even at another department. As one officer described,

> These things [traumatic events] remind us of the reality of our work. Any given day, someone could try to kill me. Coming to work, I'm signing up for that. I know that. But when it happens to someone else it's a reminder of that reality. Kind of [a] wake up call. So yeah, it matters. It still hurts. It's almost like it did happen to me.
> (Field Notes)

During my time in the field, there were several national events that resulted in attacks and killings of police officers. For my informants, these events were evidence that police have to be constantly prepared for attack. Thus, while not directly affected themselves, my informants reported feeling "personally wounded" (Field Notes) and "distraught" (Field Notes) by these vicarious experiences. Following one of these major events that occurred on the other side of the country, one officer explained how it felt coming back to work the next day:

> Pretty uncomfortable. Somewhat reminiscent of the day after the shootout here. When something like that happens and then you have to—knowing that that is not an isolated incident only particular to those directly-affected areas; rather, a nationwide—obviously, there's a lot of angry citizens—particularly, Black Lives Matters group—and they've obviously been involved in a lot of hostile incidents, as well as non-hostile incidents, but definitely both. Certainly, it's uncomfortable to have to—you come in and you put on all your stuff like you do every day but it's just a little bit different when not even 24 hours ago…That's never happened in the United States, ever, ever in the history of policing. It's the biggest loss of police life at once since 9/11 and that wasn't, obviously, a shootout but this was something that you can't predict. (1025)

This officer went on to say that these vicariously experienced events elicit feelings of real threat and vulnerability, so much so that "I went home last night and every time a car when by the house, you're looking out the window or you're seeing if somebody saw you leave work and then follows you home" (1025).

Whether directly or vicariously experienced, traumatic situations at work were often described as resulting in negative emotions:

> I been on the job a long time – a long ass time. You learn on this job that no matter what they say to you about bein' macho and tough – it's bullshit. BS ya know? Because we see some messed up stuff and we never really get any help with it – at least not with the troopers we didn't. It's getting better I think but I still have scars from all the dead kids. Ugh, the young kids and the innocent families. Just…scars. We may pretend to be superheroes or saviors or whatnot but we've got our kryptonite that's for sure. You can't escape some of this shit. (1040)

The barrage of terrible things they have seen and done in the line of duty results in emotional pain described as "wounds" and "scars" – physical words to described an emotional experience.

Informants described feeling “beat up” by the work, or having “bugs” from the things they have seen. These experiences of emotional pain can come as a shock to the officers:

> It’s not just physical. It’s emotional and mental harm. Okay? Nobody told me when I went to the Academy that I was gonna have to deal with the shit that I’ve dealt with in my career. Nobody. You’re just gonna be chasing bad guys. Awesome. (1031)

This quote from a patrolman highlights the unexpected nature of the emotional pain they have experienced, which makes it seem like even more of an assault to the officers. As a police officer, physical harm is always a known possibility and thus, officers are provided with tools and training to defend against it. Officers learn defensive tactics in their training, tactics used to defend themselves against physical harm. They have tools on their duty belt to help defend against physical harm: a Taser, baton, OC (pepper) spray, and their gun. Lacking, however, are tools for protecting against the negative emotions brought on by the traumatic events experienced over the course of one’s career in police work. As I will explore next, members described navigating the experience of negative emotion primarily in four ways.

Methods for navigating negative emotions at work

Members reported four common methods for dealing with the emotions associated with direct and vicariously experienced traumatic events: 1) avoid emotional processing, 2) processing emotions with those outside of work, 3) formally processing emotions at work and 4) processing emotions informally with others at work, which I refer to as relational emotional processing. I will briefly detail each below, and will follow with the contextual factors that influence how members choose between these methods in response to negative emotions in life-and-death work.

Avoid Emotional Processing: One response to traumatic events described by informants is to strictly adhere to the emotional norms of police work and suppress any experience of emotions including sadness, pain, fear, or anger, and thus, avoid emotional processing altogether. For those who avoided processing, members reported observing certain behaviors that are associated with emotional suppression or emotional numbing such as isolating/detaching from others, restricted range of affect (Litz et al., 1997) as well as through behaviors that promote numbing including alcohol consumption, overeating, overspending, and overworking (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995). Avoidance behaviors were commonly ascribed to those who self-isolate and drink alcohol alone:

> My coworker saw like eight dead bodies in a year. I think he was getting really affected by it cuz his drinking started to like – he started to get really weird and drank a lot and isolated himself. Maybe it is like a tough guy thing. They – the ones that bottle it up seem to drink a lot. And are definitely more isolated. (1014)

Relatedly, those who avoid processing are those who suppress their experienced emotions:

> The other side is the guys that don't cope with it and internalize it. They're the ones that tend to drink to excess. They get depressed. They get overly cynical. It's, there's no outlet there. They don't actually cope with it, and that's the problem. You gotta be able to shut it off. You know what I mean? (1020)

Others described fellow officers who liked to "self-medicate, booze and a lotta other shit" (1035), behaviors that are known to promote emotional numbing (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995). While most of the officers reported or were observed to drink alcohol, there was an important distinction between drinking with others and drinking alone, where drinking alone was dangerous. Drinking with others was simply seen as "blowing off steam" (1001).

Process emotions with those outside of work: For those who do choose to process their emotional experiences, one option is to process the emotions with outsiders – those who do not work in law enforcement. This can come either formally through therapy or informally through conversations with friends and family. As one interviewee explained,

> I actually started seein' a therapist, because I needed someone to talk, who was—I didn't want to be dumpin' my problems on my friends, or my fiancé at the time. That's helped.

> It's like, okay, every couple of weeks I get to sit and talk to somebody, and get things off my mind.

Additionally, I had two female officers report that they found comfort in processing events with their respective spouse; their status as outsider is questionable, however, because in both cases, the spouse was also in law enforcement: "Well, I'm in a unique situation, because I'm married to a cop. When things get bad, I have somebody I can talk to that understands where I'm coming from" (1020).

Formally process emotions at work: Recognizing the need to process with people who have also "been in the trenches" (1031), the GPD formed its own team of peer support leaders during my time in the field, known as the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) squad. This was very similar to the formal debriefing Tangherlini (1998) described that was available to his paramedic informants. CISM members at GPD underwent special training in critical incidences and were then intended to be confidential sounding boards for any member of the department facing emotional challenges on the job. This peer support network is common in police agencies,

> They have, every department has a peer support group. You talk to them, and they can help you try and figure things out. They can come up with a plan for you, or whatever. …They're better equipped at dealing with that stuff. (1026)

While very new at the GPD, this type of peer support exists at many other departments, although the design and structure vary by agency.

Process emotions informally with others at work: One method that emerged as particularly important according to my informants in this context is processing emotions through informal conversations with trusted others at work. Through my time observing, I discovered that police officers routinely created time in their work day and some also created time outside of work to informally discuss work-related events with certain others. These informal interaction spaces routinely created amongst colleagues presented as the most critical method for overcoming emotional pain as they created opportunities for an adaptive form of emotional processing to take place between colleagues that I refer to as ***relational emotional processing*** – *an enactment whereby individuals re-engage the memory of a traumatic event with trusted others at work, cognitively reappraise the event, and socially affirm the emotional experience associated with the event,* which allows individuals to become unburdened by the negative emotions associated with traumatic events without fear of retribution for expressing forbidden emotions. As I will explore in the section that follows, relational emotional processing is particularly important in this context because it is seen as both safe and effective compared to the other three methods.

Contextual influences on navigating emotions

Across these four strategies, members' reported engagement with each method was determined by 1) how safe each method felt (e.g., engaging in therapy puts you are risk for being seen as unfit for duty and weak) and 2) by shared perceptions regarding the efficacy of each method (e.g., peer counselors cannot actually help you deal with your emotions). Through my observations, I found that these assessments are related to each method's frequency of use, whereby the (perceived) safest and most effective method was used most and vice versa, as detailed in **Figure 2.3**. When gauging safety, members drew on the emotional norms of police work that encourage presenting oneself as tough and unaffected, thus making any kind of formal intervention potentially risky. Efficacy perceptions rely on whether or not members believe that engaging in the method will actually be helpful to them in regards to their emotional well-being following trauma.

[INSERT FIGURE 2.3 HERE]

Perceived emotional norms: GPD members described that in the face of difficult events, they are expected to remain strong, hardened, and seemingly unaffected. This projected invincibility was thought to serve as armor against the onslaught of traumatic experiences; in this way, members were expected to be emotionally bulletproof:

> Yeah. I guess bulletproof doesn't just mean bullets; it's everything else, too. Yeah, you have to be invulnerable to what you're gonna be called while you're drivin' by or spit on—have the cruiser spit on or seeing horrific things—dead bodies or beaten people and sad people. Yeah, I guess the Superman thing is not just physical but the emotional shield you have to have on every day, which helps you come back to that next shift. (1001)

While being emotionally protected helps to defend against the difficult events encountered, it also helps to uphold the projected image of a police officer. As one officer explains,

> Yeah, just the persona of being a cop makes it difficult, because you're supposed to be detached. You're supposed to be unemotional. You're supposed to be strong and uncaring. Not uncaring, but stoic. That's the word I'm looking for. You're not supposed to let anything bother you, because that's just—you're supposed to be a wall, and stuff is just supposed to bounce off you. (1020)

Upholding this persona of being emotionally unaffected is crucial for maintaining one's reputation as a strong and capable police officer. The officer quoted above continues on about the importance of being unaffected stating,

> But if you show any signs of emotional disturbance or distress it's viewed as a sign of weakness, almost a character flaw. Then you have to consider the professional ramifications, which means that they're gonna pull you off the street and your ability to do your job is compromised. Your ability to make extra money is compromised. They pull you off the street. Then you get a reputation. Your reputation is compromised. You're viewed as damaged, basically. You're not able to do your job anymore. (1020)

The professional ramifications of admission of being emotionally affected are a strong deterrent for many officers to seek help managing the emotional challenges of their work. This is because of their fear of the *rubber gun squad*: if an officer admits to feeling emotionally affected by their work, it triggers a mental health concern for the organization, leading to an immediate revocation of their badge and gun - two meaningful artifacts that make a police officer more than a mere civilian – and put on desk duty until they have been deemed fit to resume active duty:

> “Look, you just can’t go around talking about your feelings. You can’t talk about it. You learn that pretty early at the Academy and then in your first few years in a department. You see bad shit and you keep your head down. ‘Cause the alternative is the rubber gun squad and that, [laughing] fuck. That isn’t what anybody wants. Bottom line - you can’t be a cop if you don’t have your gun. Then you’re just another shithead like the rest of ‘em.” (1029)

Officers are taught in their training at the police academy about the importance of this emotional shield that they are expected to hold. As one lieutenant stated,

> We would tell them at the Academy, guys you’re gonna see some fucked up shit. Some really fucked up and disgusting shit that’ll make you wanna vomit. Or piss yourself. Or both. But that’s the job. We don’t want any pussies here who are gonna cry about it like fuckin pansies, ok? You know what I mean? (1043)

Officers and their superiors often associated expression of emotion as weakness, as suggested by the professional stigma associated with being emotionally affected by their work which makes one unfit to perform their duties. This is especially true for women who are already seen as less masculine given their sex, and therefore, are presumed to be less fit to do this “men’s work” (Martin, 1999):

> You can't show your (emotions)—women really, if you're crying, you're done. You really can't because there's been times that you —you want to have a meltdown, but you can't. You really can't.” (1003).

Wielding these emotional shields means more than blocking undesirable emotional expressions. It also means blocking any kind of vulnerable or intimate interaction with others where one might explore these intensely emotional experiences:

> I didn’t talk to…you didn’t talk about it, so for me to talk to other troopers no. I learned that early on when my troop commander lambasted me about being basically telling me I was weak because I was upset about a five-year-old dying in my arms. As far as talking to other people, no. No. I internalized it a lot. (1031)

Taken together, the emotional norms expected in police work support a particular "ideal" image of a police officer such that their actions must constantly confirm their masculine image to others by exaggerating the characteristics associated with manhood such as physical prowess, courage, and aggression. Despite these norms, however, officers reported that they were in fact emotionally affected by various events in their work. While the emotional norms are expected to act as a shield from these emotional experiences, it is evident in my data that this was not the lived experience of my informants:

> We're supposed to be tough, and immune to feelings, but when you see…if you ever see dead bodies and broken homes and stuff, it sucks. It's hard. It's hard on anybody. You can't be, you can only be a robot up unto a certain point, and then, you know what I mean? (1026)

Thus, members must consider one of the four identified methods for navigating their experience of emotions in a setting where feeling emotions is perceived to be problematic. When making decisions about how to navigate these feelings, members drew on perceptions of safety/risk and efficacy of each of the possible methods.

Perception of safety & efficacy: Each of the four methods varied in perceived safety and perceived efficacy, which appeared to influence engagement in these strategies. For each method, informants described similar perceptions around risk assessments and efficacy which I will detail below.

Avoiding emotional processing. Perceived as a very risky method, no informants reported exclusive avoidance of emotional processing. Those who did acknowledge engaging in avoidance behaviors stated that it was something they "fell victim to" (Field Notes) momentarily, but that they knew was not sustainable. However, many reported seeing others who fell victim to strict adherence to the emotional norms that encourage suppression (rather than processing) and the risks that follow, risks that are in-line with the known dangers of unprocessed emotions, PTSD, and emotional numbing. The first risk associated with avoiding emotional processing is the threat of destructive behaviors:

> What happens with cops is they build up this—they build it up and build it up and then something bad happens, like they drink too much or they have domestics at home, all that kind of stuff, and some of them commit suicide. (1018)

Destructive behaviors such as drinking alone and committing suicide were commonly ascribed to those officers who believed themselves to be "emotionally bulletproof" and tried to handle everything alone. Being along in this kind of work can be dangerous – both physically and emotionally. The destructive behaviors associated with a lack of emotional processing were often seen as evidence of the harsh emotional realities of the work and the need for emotional processing of difficult events. Nearly every one of my informants personally knew someone in law enforcement who had taken their own life, and many attributed these outcomes to the harsh realities of their work. Many also had stories of those who became so debilitated by their trauma, they became unfit for the job. As one informant described,

> Anyone ever tell you about Abrams? Abrams was a real quiet keep-to-himself kinda guy which to tell ya the truth was part of his problem. One day he was on a call and the bad guy stuck a gun in his face. Right in his face. He got the guy no problem, but he never came back from that incident. Not really. He stopped going out on the road. He started doing weird shit. Cutting up pictures of ladies underwear from magazines and putting 'em in his wallet. Weird weird shit. So no one knew what the hell to do because he was always so to himself. Eventually he went out on disability. Worst part is you know that gun in his face? It was fake. (Field Notes).

The second risk in relying on the constricting "emotionally bulletproof" norm is that is causes officers to lose a part of their humanity, resulting in a deadening of the self. While officers are expected to suppress emotional expression to project adherence to the perceived emotional norms, officers explained that without proper processing, over time it can lead to a loss of humanity. The things they see and do are so intensely emotional that to be unaffected is almost inhuman:

> Oh it was ugly. He was showing me pictures of people that would kill themselves and laughing about it. Like he thought it was funny. I mean these are people freshly dead and he's giggling and laughing. You know? It's – there's no way you find that funny. He was such a monster. (1014).

In addition to the perceived risks associated with avoiding emotional processing, informants also reported a perceived lack of efficacy of this method. Suppression does not actually resolve the emotional experience – it stifles it temporarily with the danger of it being expressed at some later time, likely through a violent explosion. As one dispatcher described about the officers, "Yeah. Some people, that's just their makeup. I just think that's a bad idea, 'cause you're holding it in. You hold it in and you explode" (1033). This explosion is often an eruption of violent and aggressive behavior. One sergeant explained,

> [They] lash out. The guy that broke that girl's face, he was the one that bottled it up. He was ex-military and he drank a lot. Didn't talk about it and then he'd get drunk and lash out. It's like – it's bottled up and then instead of just like dealing with it, it just explodes into violent behavior. (1014)

Many of my informants shared stories of one of their colleagues who they all believed was prone to these aggressive outbursts, yet was still on the job. Whenever anyone heard that I had spent time with this officer on a ride along, the stories would come and they always included the same two anecdotes: he killed one of his (many) past wives and he killed his puppy. As one informant described, "don't let him fool ya. He'll say, 'my love' and 'God rest her soul' but he cut her brakes. There was no accident there. He's a fuckin' maniac" (Field Notes).

Despite the risks and perceived inefficacy of avoiding emotional processing, a few of my informants described behaviors that reflect emotional numbing behavior – they isolated themselves from others at work, they reported no other method for processing difficult events, and even described heavy drinking as a way to cope. As one officer described,

> I been (*sic*) on the job a helluva long time. Since before you were born, hon. You learn over time to keep it in. I don't need to talk to anyone about it or you. There's nothing to tell. Nothin' bothers me anymore, I've seen it all. Just how it goes.
> (Field Notes)

This informant is the same that was often the subject of other officer's stories – the one who others believed – or at least was rumored – to have murdered his wife and puppy.

Process emotions with those outside work – formally and informally. Of my 44 interviews and all my informal conversations, only three members reported seeking formal therapy; all of those confirmed with me multiple times that I would not share that information with anyone else. Following one particular interview, as soon as I turned off the recording he pleaded with me, "you can't tell anyone about that therapy thing. People wouldn't…they'd…I just can't. Please don't mention it, okay?" (Field notes). This is likely a result of the threat of the rubber gun squad, where according to one of my informants, any evidence that someone is emotionally affected by the work will result in a fitness for duty evaluation that, regardless of the findings of the evaluation, will leave the person with a tainted reputation (Field notes).

For the three members who engaged in formal emotional processing with outsiders, these individuals expressed a general lack of distrust with the majority of their colleagues. While they were not "loners", as those suspected to engage in emotional numbing were described, they did not describe any trusted colleagues at work nor did I observe them partaking in the fourth method, relational emotional processing with others.

Despite the possibility of reputation damage if colleagues find out about therapy, the three individuals who engaged in it did feel like they could control who knew that information. Additionally, those who engaged in formal therapy found it to be effective, as the informant above indicated "that's helped". In this way, at least for those who did admit to engaging in formal emotional processing with outsiders, it was deemed moderately safe and effective.

Seeking informal help from those outside the profession is also complicated for members, making this an unlikely method for emotional processing. First, many informants reported that they were uncomfortable sharing this information with their family because of the burden it poses: “I want my wife to be able to sleep at night, you know? And my kids, they’re worried enough about me without knowing the details of the shit we deal with” (Field notes). Others felt like they could not talk about their work with those outside of law enforcement because, “you can’t vent to someone who’s not doing this job ‘cause they’ll just give you – they’ll nod and smile. They’ll have no idea what you’re talking about. It’s a particular perspective” (1009). For these reasons, informal processing with those outside of work was seen by my informants as moderately unsafe (for the burden it puts on others) and ineffective (because outsiders don’t understand). The only two informants who reported processing outside of work with friends or family did so with their spouse who also worked in law enforcement.

Formally process emotions at work. Formal processing at the GPD was offered through the newly created CISM team. Despite the intention for it to be a confidential way to receive support from peers, most of my informants expressed distrust in the system and with those on the squad:

> I think it’s a liability, ass-covering by the department. I know everybody went out and got their training and that’s fantastic. Does it make me feel like if something happened and I needed to maybe talk to somebody in a peer support environment that that makes me feel good? No, I would rather go to a different agency to talk to somebody. I would rather do anything than talk to anybody in this department— I mean, you work at a place long enough, you get to know people and you get to go, “Really? When I’m feeling shitty, I’m gonna come talk to you guys? Because you went to a week of training? No, thanks. (1025)

It’s clear that my informants recognize the importance of support, but processing their emotions through a formal method established by the department still feels unsafe. Part of this is driven by lack of perceived legitimacy of the CISM representatives. As one informant explained, “I don’t think they [trained CISM members] have really been through it so how are they supposed to help me?" (Field Notes, June 2016). Additionally, members express an importance of trusting anyone they open up to, and there are a limited number of trained CISM members, leaving some feeling that they don't have a trusted person on the CISM team to go, as one put it, "It's stupid…it's the worst people on it…it's an awful group…" (1022). One informant expressed the internal thought process that he goes through every time he considers using this formal support:

> you're like, all right, what's this gonna do if I vent this? What happens to me? Where is this gonna go? Is this just gonna create more stress for me? Is it worth friggin' bringing up? Do I look like a crybaby? You know what I mean? Yeah, you do. You're kinda like, is it worth it? Is it worth it? Is it worth addressing, or is it something I can eat and swallow and friggin' hold onto? (1036)

Of my 44 interviews, not a single person acknowledged using the CISM group to process difficult events. It is worth noting, however, that CISM was introduced only months before I arrived. It is possible that with more time, individuals could become more comfortable with such an offering. Regardless, at the time of my fieldwork, my informants deemed formal emotional processing with insiders both unsafe and ineffective – so much so that no one had yet to take advantage of it throughout my nine months in the field.

Process emotions informally with others at work. Despite the perceived emotional norms at the GPD and of police work more generally, I observed many of my informants discussing traumatic events with certain others at work in small group settings of two to five people. As one informant explained:

> I only confide in about two people in this whole place…You build a trust. We were faced with life and death things every day and we bonded around shared experienced. We bonded around, not just the shared experiences. We were able to socialize together, go have beers, go out to lunch….the ones you trust are ones that you've had probably some shared experiences with and your know how they performed and you've been able to give the information to that doesn't leak out somewhere else (1036).

Many of my informants described a similar experience of developing a small group of trusted others with whom they can confide. Confiding only in trusted others is deemed safe, especially in comparison to the other possible methods for navigating their emotions. Additionally, this informal processing was deemed effective because of a shared understanding of the nature of this kind of work:

> you need to go out with people like minded like you…either a celebration for a good night or bonding over a bad night can be important….Either they're pullin' you through a bad time, or they're just, you're pullin' each other through (1001).

This "pullin' each other through" (1001) was similarly described by others as "lifting a weight off my shoulders" (Field Notes) and as "helping move through the tough shit" (Field Notes). In this way, informal processing was deemed as an effective way to become unburdened by the emotions associated with traumatic events.

This informal emotional processing reflects an undertheorized method for navigating the emotions associated with trauma that I now refer to as relational emotional processing. Following the suggested importance of relational emotional processing in this context – both in terms of frequency of use and reported efficacy – further analysis of my data clarified how these relational emotional processing interactions arise as well as the relevant outcomes for members of the GPD. In the following section, I will detail the relational emotional processing model that emerged from my iterative data analysis, as illustrated in **Figure 2.4**.

[INSERT FIGURE 2.4 HERE]

Relational Emotional Processing in Life-and-Death Work

From Starsky and Hutch to Jon and Ponch of CHiPs and the female duo Cagney and Lacey, popular dramatizations of police work in movies or on TV often portray police work as being accomplished with enduring and loyal partnerships. Through my time in the field, however, I came to find the actual work of police is largely accomplished in solitude. While some officers on some days worked with a partner, or some field assignments required two-person patrols, the majority of officers most often spent their days in their patrol cars alone[4].

With their work accomplished in solitude, I observed many of the officers in my study socializing with others in routine ways. In interviews, I was able to explore these social interactions with others and learned that these informal interaction opportunities serve, among other things, a previously untheorized purpose of creating a routinely recurring opportunity for relational emotional processing with trusted others. In the following sections, I will explore how officers create these bounded spaces, enact relational emotional processing, and how this processing leads to key individual outcomes including becoming unburdened by traumatic events.

Boundary Creation: While officers start their day at the station for roll call together, this may be the only guaranteed time they are around their co-workers for the remainder of their shift. To counteract the fact that much of their actual police work was done on individual patrols, many officers structured their days around moments when they could be physically with others at work. These moments of connection with others took place every day (if possible), even on days without any difficult or traumatic event. In many cases, this meant that officers created bounded time, in bounded physical space, with a bounded set of trusted others. Individuals create boundaries, "physical, temporal, emotional, cognitive, and/or relational limits that define entities as separate from one another…(that) results in the creation of slices of reality… that have particular meaning for the individual(s) creating" (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000: 474) the boundaries. In this way, I observed my informants creating boundaries that set apart certain places and times with certain people that enabled relational emotional processing interactions to occur.

---

[4] This is true beyond my field setting as well. Many police organizations operate in favor of the one-person patrol vehicle as opposed to two, following suggestions from efficiency studies dating back to the 1970s (U.S. Department of Justice). In some departments, the only time the 1-person rule is violated is during new officer training.

Creating time and finding space away from work to interact with others: Many officers coordinated times to meet with others through the day. Some of the most common times and spaces observed for interaction with others included "coffee time", meal times, or cruiser cuddles – two patrol vehicles with the driver's sides adjacent so that the officers can exchange discourse through open windows. As one officer described:

> You might say, hey. Let's meet for—you're by yourself all day, eight hours. You might say, hey. Let's meet for tea, or coffee, or something, and you go in the coffee shop, and whatever's going on with you, it's gonna come out, whether it's something real bad or just some simple thing bothering you. (1005)

In this way, these physical spaces created bounded opportunities for my informants to talk about difficult events with one another. For many, these moments became highly routinized such that officers didn't even need to discuss the planning of these interaction because it had become such an engrained part of the daily routine. As one officer described,

> We start the day at roll call and then me and my boys head for coffee time and we'll sit there for maybe an hour or at least until one of us gets a call. But usually we don't hang for more than an hour…There's never a day that coffee time doesn't happen unless I'm on a call right away or it's a special event or something. But even if I'm not there the guys carry on without me. (Field Notes)

While coffee time was very routinized, cruiser cuddles could be spontaneous or coordinated. As I observed on several ride alongs, if an officer had something specific they needed to discuss, they would send a text message to a fellow officer and request a cruiser cuddle at a particular location, typically away from the "wandering eyes of the public" (in an alley or lesser traveled road) (Field Notes). The officers would then meet and park with the front of each patrol car facing the opposite directions such that the drivers of each car can open their window and easily communicate with one another[5]. Alternatively, if an officer observed one of their trusted colleagues parked, they might choose to engage in a cruiser cuddle spontaneously. Interestingly, the officers did not refer to these interactions as cruiser cuddles with one another. Yet when I asked about these moments, informants described them to me as cruiser cuddles or even cruiser spooning:

> Oh. Yeah, you'll see us doing it all the time. Cruiser cuddles or spooning. It's a chance to talk to someone privately, away from it all. Gives me a chance to get someone's perspective on something without everyone else yapping and weighing in with their bullshit… I might do it [cruiser cuddle] every day, or at least every day when I'm solo and my people are working. (Field Notes)

These times and spaces are bound in that they were always physically separate from the police station or site of any police call/location where work is actually accomplished. At no time did any informant describe spending important time with others at the station or on a call, as these were seen unsafe because they were not private or separate from the work and from untrusted others. In particular, officers reported not trusting "the guys upstairs" (the command staff).

Defining trusted others with whom to interact: While most of the officers described or were observed attending coffee time or engaging in cruiser cuddles, who you were with mattered. Informants described "my people", "my guys", "my group", and "the good guys" to indicate those who were trusted others as compared to those who were not:

> It's like any other place. We've got our groups or cliques or what have you. But here it's like to the extreme. You don't even talk to the people outside your group. Hell, some of 'em I try not to so much as look at them because they just make me sick…but my people. They're good people and I'd do anything for them (1001).

---

[5] Image depicting a cruiser cuddle posted in the Appendix

This is especially important when it comes to discussions about traumatic events, because "you can't just talk to anybody about anything. That's what gets you in trouble. You have to be real (*sic*) careful" (1034). Instead, members relied on in-groups and out-groups, "my people", "us or them" and then as one officer described, "it's us against them. That's how you do it. You keep the ranks closed and when you close ranks, you feel some brotherhood there, and that's really how they—that's how we did it back then (1018). Individuals identified as "my people" are those who understand the realities of the work but more importantly, can be trusted:

> Find somebody you can trust. These guys all do a similar job. Pull someone aside who's seen the same horrible crap you've seen and let them know, "This stuff's bothering me today." Like I said, it helps to let it out. Or just to hang together. Either way it helps. (1033)

Coffee time was a particularly visible display of the social *and* physical boundaries between cliques. Who you went to coffee time with and where you went for coffee were very clear boundaries separating your people from everyone else. As an example, during the day-shift (7:30 a.m. -3:30 p.m.) on a particular day, there could be six patrolmen, one or two sergeants, four detectives, five command staff, two dispatchers, and five or more support personnel. Within this one day-shift of people, I observed five different coffee time cliques, all of which went to different coffee shops at roughly the same time. Even those who chose not to engage in coffee time with others did go for coffee (or tea) on their own; coffee which they procured from entirely separate coffee shops than everyone else. Over time, I observed the same to be true across the other shifts – you go to coffee time with your people and no one else:

> You're lucky we let you in the inner sanctum here (laughs). Really. We're a pretty tight group here and we don't like to switch things up. Messes the whole vibe, you know? Every once and a while Sammy [someone from another shift] sits with us if he's stuck on days but no one says anything. We drink our drinks and eat and bolt. But you've seen us other days. I know all my guys' order. We talk, we bullshit. You're pretty lucky we let you in on that. (1041)

These boundaries that separated one clique's coffee time from others were very difficult to permeate, as described by this informant. This made it challenging for those who ended up working a shift that was not their usual shift, or for those who switched shifts. This permeation difficulty for the officers is interesting to consider in comparison to my experience as alluded to above, where I was seemingly welcomed into several coffee time cliques through my time. However, quite unintentionally, my process for accessing these sacred times likely worked to my advantage, as I spent several weeks within one particular clique at a time, never attempting to cross same-shift cliques (other than joining those who went for coffee alone). It is possible that in this way, I was not seen as a threat to the bounds that separated one group from others.

Taken together, my informants created time, physical space, and social boundaries that resulted in protected spaces for interactions between in-group members, whether at coffee time or within a cruiser cuddle. The more time I observed these bounded spaces created between trusted members of the department, it became clear that these relational spaces presented opportunities for officers to talk about the more traumatic events of their work. Specifically, members were able to engage in informal emotional processing with trusted others, which I refer to as *relational emotional processing*.

Enactment of Relational Emotional Processing

The enactment of relational emotional processing involves three key steps, two of which are similar to the steps involved in traditional emotional processing. The third is an additional aspect that emerges given the relational nature of this type of processing: 1) re-engaging traumatic memories, 2) re-appraisal of the event, and 3) social affirmation of the emotional experience.

***Re-engaging traumatic events with others*:** For relational emotional processing to begin, someone within the bounded space must re-engage with the memory of a traumatic event. Within the context of police work, this could be an event that an officer was directly involved in (e.g., crime scene, violent encounter, etc.) or an event that befell a fellow officer but that has resulted in vicarious traumatization of those who heard/learned about it. As one officer described regarding the death of a fellow officer in the line of duty,

> I mean, the average person doesn't even remotely think about being injured or killed when they go to work every day. We do. You have to. It changes you every time that happens. Every time there's a fallen officer, you wanna know as much about it as you can to learn. (1006)

These events evoke forbidden emotions in this setting such as fear of being killed on the job or sadness at seeing a fellow officer killed – emotions they can't openly express given the perceived emotional norms of police work. Since they do feel these emotions, however, emotions that could interfere with their ability to do their job, officers engage in informal processing with others in their in-group. To begin processing the event, officers raise the topic within their shared relational spaces:

> Something tragic like a big incident, I think some officers, somebody will subtly bring it up. Oh, this happened. I saw this…then sometimes there's a group conversation you can get engaged, which is nice, because officers can open up to each other. (1005)

To re-engage with these painful events and memories, officers rehashed incidents repeatedly over the course of several days or even weeks depending on the situation. The officers seemed intent on watching every dash cam or body cam video of officer involved shootings or other major police events from around the world. They watched them with each other and then discussed them within the bounded relational spaces. One patrol officer explained,

> You'll see that guys tend to rehash incidents. They'll rehash them time and time again, which is a way of coping, almost like you're talking yourself down. You're trying to see

> if there's anything that could've been done differently, but it's more of a—it's almost if you say it it doesn't make it as bad. That's why you see guys will rehash incidents over and over again. (1020)

Thus, rehashing the details of an event allowed individuals to begin to reshape their understanding of the event and reappraise its meaning for themselves and others.

***Cognitive re-appraisal of event*:** Through their rehashing of traumatic events, officers were able to add new information to the once painful memory of the traumatic event which helped them to re-appraise the event as less painful, a key aspect of emotional processing. This was true for events that were experienced by the individuals themselves, or those events that were vicariously traumatizing. As one officer described recalling an officer-involved shooting at the GPD,

> I wanted to know everything about it that I could…what could have happened, what should have happened, how do you get in that situation, how do you avoid it? Just try to learn as much as you can from it, and bring it out every day when you're out on shift. (1006)

In this way, re-engaging traumatic events became a way to learn new things to become safer and better every day on the job. Thinking about the event in this way, as a lesson for continued diligence and improvement, shifted the focus away from the trauma of the event and toward ways for preventing similar events from occurring in the future. This was a very common reaction from my informants as they described that rehashing allowed them to "see things we might not ever see but just in case we do, we can be better prepared than those who came before us" (1001) or to "see it [traumatic event] as an opportunity to be just a little better than last time" (Field Notes).

Another way traumatic events were reappraised resulted in events that at one time provoked fear or sadness – seen as more paralyzing emotions in this setting - were rehashed and reimagined in ways that instead incited anger, an action-oriented emotion. During my time in the field, there was a particularly traumatic event that occurred on the other side of the country, but that reverberated through the GPD. During what was to be a peaceful Black Lives Matter protest, a lone assailant ambushed and fired upon a group of police officers, leaving five officers dead and nine others wounded. My informants described feeling like there was a "war on police" (Field Notes) in the United States at this time, and that this was just one of many perceived attacks. In describing the importance of talking about this attack at coffee time, one informant explained,

> We do have a job to do. We wanna do that job. Others expect us to do that job, and we don't wanna let anybody down. Ourselves, our families, our partners, our brothers, our sisters here, we don't wanna let anybody down by not doing our job. Angry, we can go out on the street and handle anything, and afraid, we're not gonna handle anything at all. We're just not gonna. (1001)

Anger was prevalent at the GPD and was particularly intriguing when it followed traumatic events. Informants themselves described this anger as something that helps bond and unify a group,

> it holds a team together. we all have a common goal, a common complaint. We're all in the same boat and we're all against the source, or perceived source of you know same thing with battle or anything. This is the enemy and this is and we're who we are. In order to defeat, we have to unify and we all have this common discussion. Like I said, the us and them It could be. I feel your pain type of thing and I relate—I have that same feelings type of compassion that you're expressing. You're not [sic] preaching to the choir type of thing and I'll join you. It's camaraderie. (1010)

Anger, thus, demonstrated a very powerful re-appraisal of situations when others shared in this anger appraisal in that it helped further solidify the boundaries of the group and remind individuals that they are not alone with their emotions – regardless of the situation.

***Social affirmation of emotional experience*:** Thus far, the emotional processing in this context has largely resembled that which takes place in formal therapeutic settings: revisiting the event and re-appraising the event as less painful. What separates the processing I observed in this setting is the social affirmation that comes from mutuality of experience. Specifically, it was very rare for a traumatic event to be challenging for only one person, especially given the likelihood of vicarious traumatization, as described previously. Given the possibility of vicarious traumatization, an event that happens to one officer is likely to be felt by others.

Therefore, when officers engaged in event rehashing and reappraisal within their bounded relational spaces, it was unlikely that only one officer was the beneficiary of the relational emotional processing that occurred, as described by my informant who stated that in these interactions, "you're pullin' each other through" (1001). This collective rehashing and reappraisal validated and legitimized an individual's feelings about the traumatic event and by extension, socially affirmed the felt emotional experience:

> It's almost like an affirmation. Let's put it that way. I'm not crazy. It's okay to have these feelings type thing, as opposed to talking to someone that isn't familiar with the culture telling you it's okay, because it really probably is not. You know what I mean? It really, probably isn't. He's just saying that to make me feel better. But if you can talk to somebody that understands and empathizes, and isn't just giving you lip service, you almost unburden yourself. It's like, okay. I'm not crazy. It's okay to feel this way. (1020)

Thus, through the temporal, physical, and relational boundaries crafted, members created safe space for exposing oneself as emotionally affected by the traumatic events of life-and-death work – something that would otherwise be forbidden by the emotional norms of the organization. Through shared rehashing and reappraisal of traumatic events, individuals acknowledge a mutuality of experience that validates their emotional experience. Individuals come to see that despite emotional norms encouraging suppression of negative emotions, relational emotional processing with trusted others is a more effective way to handle emotional experiences in this setting:

> There is a way to handle those feelings, and acknowledge them, and you're not weak. In fact, you're really strong. Because it's strong people who can recognize those things. (1039)

While I have described this as a linear process, it is important to acknowledge the cyclical nature of relational emotional processing. Given the bounded time and space of these interactions, it is unlikely that any one interaction will result in complete processing of any one event. Therefore, a process could start and stop multiple times before completion. Also, events were often revisited several times over the course of days, weeks, and even months. Therefore, while I see all three steps as being critical for relational emotional processing to be successful, they will not necessarily occur in the linear manner described above.

Outcomes of Relational Emotional Processing

Members described three key outcomes of the relational emotional processing: decreased emotional burden, strengthened bond with trusted others, and increased social distance with outsiders, as detailed in **Figure 2.4**.

Decreased emotional burden: Informants who engaged in relational emotional processing at work expressed a reduction in the pain, fear, sadness, and suffering associated with traumatic events. As one informant described:

> I walked out of there and I felt like the world was just like, "Oh my God," That knapsack with 300 pounds on my back I've been carrying for that long was empty. I wasn't even carrying the knapsack anymore. Yeah. The easiest way that I can say it is that you're working outside in the yard. Okay? You're digging ditches all day long. You're covered from head to toe in dirt. You go in to your house. You strip down and you jump in the shower. Water, soap, and you're cleansed. That's what it's like. (1031)

Others described that relational emotional processing "takes the edge off" (1006) and that re-engaging with the memories of the incidents "makes it easier" (1005). In this way, relational emotional processing achieves the same desired outcome of emotional processing in therapeutic settings: becoming unburdened by traumatic events.

Strengthened bond with trusted others: Given the relational nature of this type of processing, its enactment also results in strengthened bonds between those involved. Informants reported feeling "bonded", "closer" and "good" (Field Notes) with members of their group following relational emotional processing interactions. Following the on-duty murder of a local police officer, two officers engaged in a cruiser cuddle on a highway overpass, under which the fallen officer was being transported to the local morgue. The two officers talked about the events leading to the officer's death, engaging in relational emotional processing. As I rode away with one of the two officers, he explained that

> there's nothing quite as powerful as talking about death. Talking about it with Shawn like that just now. Hits me right in the feels. I can't talk like that with other people. Not around here anyway. I don't know what I'd do without him – without that. He's my brother and I don't know what I'd do if I didn't have him at times like this. (Field Notes)

This interaction was both a reflection of their trust of one another but also served to further strengthen their bond with one another.

Increased social distance with outsiders: Relatedly, engaging in relational emotional processing with trusted others created increased perceived distance with those outside the group. As one informant described,

> I can't imagine we have anything in common. Look who he spends his time with – see them? They haven't been here long enough to see anything real. He never even turns on his blue lights. We've seen stuff though. I'm sure Johnny told you some of the stories from back in the day. We were here when it was still the Wild West. We can't relate to those still wet behind the ears. There's nothing to talk about." (Field Notes)

This account of whether or not this informant could engage in conversation about certain events demonstrated the way individuals compare perceived experiential similarities with outsiders as compared to those within their social group. Because they do not engage in relational emotional processing with outsiders – even though they are peer officers, there is a lack of perceived mutuality of experience that further deepens the space between insiders and outsider.

Feedback loop: The latter two outcomes, the strengthened bond with insiders and increased social distance from outsiders, further reinforce the boundaries necessary for creating safe spaces for relational processes, as illustrated in **Figure 2.4**.

CHAPTER 5: CONNECTING STUDY 1 & STUDY 2

It was evident in Study 1 that organizational members were part of certain groups or communities at work and the boundaries of insiders and outsiders were particularly evident in informal relational emotional processing interactions. This type of relationship or network of relationships is consistent with what has come to be called a psychological sense of community, a term I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter. I suggest that a psychological sense of community (PSOC), defined as "a member's feeling of being part of an interdependent community, a feeling that one is part of a larger, dependable and stable structure that will meet key needs, and a sense of responsibility for the well-being of that community and its members" (Boyd & Nowell, 2014: 109) is critical in shaping the forms of interactions following traumatic events that include relational emotional processing.

Relatedly, Study 1 findings suggested the types of spaces in which these interactions occurred, including coffee shops, restaurants, bars, and cars. Scholars have shown that space itself is an important determinant in creating a "safe" environment where people can actively share and listen to one another while suspending judgment (Bohm, 1990; Isaacs, 1999; Senge, 1990). Much as a therapist's office creates a safe holding environment (Borg, 2013; Winnicott, 1960) that physically contains therapy, these spaces seem to serve as temporary holding environments for emotional processing between trusted colleagues. I explored the importance of these spaces and how certain spaces came to be seen as safe spaces to openly discuss emotions (i.e., engage in relational emotional processing) versus other spaces that are not in Study 2.

Lastly, it is important to acknowledge the organizational context – the culture, structure, practices, values and attitudes of an organization - within which all of this takes place and whether or not the context facilitates a sense of psychological safety for its members or whether it has norms that interfere with one's sense of such safety. While Study 1 focused exclusive on a context with constricting emotional norms, Study 2 demonstrates that not all organizations engaged in life-and-death work adhere to these constricting norms. Instead, there are hints in my data that suggest it is possible to have a more open, safe environment for emotional processing. The organization itself, through practices, norms and implicit and explicit messaging, shapes whether and how individuals may come to feel *safe* processing their emotions in life-and-death work. The sense of safety is almost paradoxical in this work, as safety is defined as feeling protected from or not exposed to danger or risk (Oxford Dictionary). Yet, exposure to risk and danger – both physical and emotion danger – is inevitable in life-and-death work. Thus, what it means to feel safe deserves consideration in this context. Feeling safe in this work is not about ignoring the dangers, as a veteran police officer Cline writes:

> Though officer safety was stressed at the academy…it seldom occurred to me that I might actually get hurt or possibly lose my life at work…Doing dangerous things, while holding the belief that one cannot or will not be hurt, is fun and exciting. It is a way to garner accolades from peers who also get off on the thrills and recognition, but don't call it courageous; it's selfish recklessness that too often nets our family a eulogy and a flag they don't want… There is a great movie I watched with my children entitled "Angus." It's about a smart fat kid struggling with the cruelty bullies inflicted upon him. George C. Scott plays Angus' grandfather. They have a conversation about courage. Grandfather makes the point that Superman is not at all courageous because he is invincible. He knows nothing can hurt him. Humans don't have that luxury. (Police1, 2015)

Embedded in Cline's story here is that humans are not invincible or invulnerable, and thus, acting as if we were is not safe, it is reckless. Yet, many police departments today still hype this notion of physical safety through invulnerability and self-sufficiency. They support this notion first by norms that suggest that being emotionally affected is a weakness and second by practices that leave officers physically isolated from one other. Officers in these departments are left without a holding environment – a setting where people overwhelmed by their emotions can be secured, listened to, and valued by others (Kahn, 2001). This lack of holding challenges one's sense of psychological safety – a sense of being comfortable expressing and being themselves (Edmondson, 2018) "without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career" (Kahn, 1990: 708). In the absence of organizational holding to provide a sense of psychological safety, some scholars believe that members will be driven to simulate a sense of safety through an over-reliance on the self (Kahn, 2001; Reinstein, 2006). Doing so may lead individuals to the belief that they are invulnerable. In this way, a lack of organizational holding perpetuates the notion of safety through invulnerability.

Yet, at the GPD where there were norms that would seem to prevent holding, I observed many of my informants creating a group of safe others and safe spaces in which to deviate from these norms and engage in relational emotional processing – effectively creating a community holding space. That is, despite organizational norms that seem to interfere with individuals' ability to share their vulnerabilities with others and feel held by others, GPD members created what I suggest are community-level holding spaces within which they created a sense of safety not achieved through feeling invulnerable; rather, this safety was achieved by accepting the potential for harm while remaining secure in one's protection against harm through their community attachment. This sense of safety is similar to what literature on holding environments would refer to as feeling held (Bowlby, 1980; Kahn, 2001; Winnicott, 1975). Study 2 explores how this can be possible in the context of an organization that would seem to interfere with one's ability to feel held. In the next chapter, I will provide a detailed review of the relevant literature for Study 2 which lead me to three research questions that I explored through a second inductive qualitative study.

CHAPTER 6: STUDY 2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Psychological Sense of Community (PSOC)

Research has demonstrated that emotions are inherently social: elicited by, regulated for, expressed toward and experienced with others in compliance with social norms (Fischer & Manstead, 2016; Parkinson, 1996; Van Kleef, 2009). Indeed, the findings of Study 1 in Chapter Two confirm that the way individuals navigate traumatic experiences is influenced by others in a variety of ways. One such influence that has not been extensively theorized in the trauma literature is an individual’s work relationships.

Various literatures acknowledge the importance of maintaining relationships, patterns of exchanges between interacting members of organizations (Ferris et al., 2009), with others at work, whether it be for mentoring and development (Higgins & Kram, 2001; Kram, 1988), social and emotional support (Dignam, Barrera, & West, 1986; Halbesleben, 2006), or friendship (Field et al., 2016; Lincoln & Miller, 1979). Experiencing these types of relational ties has been found to improve overall well-being (Dutton & Ragins, 2007; Heaphy, 2007) and help individuals through adversity (Brewin, Andrews, & Valentine, 2000). These relationships can also cultivate a sense of community at work (Blatt & Camden, 2007) – a subjective sense of belonging together with others (Weber, 1946). At work, this could be a sense of belonging to the profession (Van Maanen & Barley, 1982), the organization, and/or smaller work group(s) within the organization. While some research has explored a sense of community relying on the geographic meaning of the word community, many psychologists refer to community as a relational experience (Gusfield, 1975).

Recognizing the importance of individuals' relationships to the larger social collectives within which they are embedded, Sarason (1974) pioneered research on community, describing a psychological sense of community (PSOC) as

> The perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, and the feelings that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure (p. 157).

Following this characterization of a PSOC, it is clear that there are many different types of relational ties that could emerge from being part of a community. With those in a community, friendships, mentor/mentee relationships, and other supportive or unsupportive relationships could emerge. Regardless of the type of tie, research has demonstrated that individuals who perceive a sense of community experience improved psychological well-being (Hilbrecht et al., 2017; Peterson, Speer, & McMillan, 2008; Prezza & Pacilli, 2007; Zani & Cicognani, 2012). Therefore, this study will explore specifically how individuals join with others to create a PSOC, as well as how a PSOC influences whether and how individuals process emotions with others at work in the context of life-and-death work.

While literature on PSOC is in its nascent stages within organizational theory, it has deeper roots in the fields of community psychology, sociology, and public health. Over several decades, this research has firmly established PSOC as a distinct construct (Boyd & Nowell, 2014; Fisher, Sonn & Bishop, 2002; Sarason, 1974), and has demonstrated its psychometric structure and measurement (Burroughs & Eby, 1998; Glynn, 1981; Jason, Stevens & Ram, 2015; Peterson, Speer & McMillan, 2008). This research has explored the benefits of a PSOC across many disciplines including urban planning, technology, and education (Chaskin, 2001; Cheverst et al., 2008; Cox et al., 2005; Dawson, Burnett & O'Donahue, 2006; Farnham et al., 2009;

Fyson, 2008; Minkler, Vasquez, Tajik & Petersen, 2008). Additionally, this research has focused on large-scale communities such as residential and geographic communities (Brodsky, O'Campo & Aronson, 1999; Perkins et al., 1990), and whole organizations such as a major corporation (Pretty & McCarthy, 1991). It has examined college campuses (Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1995), and members with a particular social identity such as gay men (Davids et al., 2015; Proescholdbell, Roosa, & Nemeroff, 2006) and people with disabilities (Miller & Keys, 1996). Given that this research has focused on existing communities – in particular, large communities - in order to establish the existence, measurement, and benefits of a PSOC, there is very little research that explores the emergence of a PSOC.

Within much of the research on PSOC, there is little recognition of individual agency regarding the shaping, creating, and maintaining of the actual community – the boundaries of who is in versus who is out does not appear to be up for member discretion. Members either experience a PSOC with a given community or they do not. Yet, as we extend this construct into organizations, we see that individuals may have agency regarding the emergence and construction of a PSOC. In their research on coworking spaces, Garrett and colleagues (2017) demonstrate how independent workers choose to work in coworking spaces with the purpose of being a part of a community and how the members work together to co-construct a PSOC through their day-to-day interactions. Members in the co-working space they studied had a mechanism to "filter out those who would not be a good fit" (831), and ostensibly, had some agency regarding who was in and who was out of the community. However, since the purpose of joining the coworking space was to create community, most members self-selected into the space and thus, were searching for community as their purpose. In this way, there was very little discernment needed and only one person was filtered out. Yet, many other types of organizations are not formed with the sole mission of establishing community. Within these organizations, a PSOC could emerge amongst the entire organization, as was seen at the coworking space, or amongst a smaller subset of the organization. While Garrett and colleagues' (2017) work suggests that members must be aligned in some way to deem other members as fit for the community, we know very little about this fit discernment process. However, as observed in Study 1, establishing a community is crucial for those in life-and-death work. The findings of this study show how members of police departments discern certain others as being part of their community, thus creating a PSOC with certain others in their organization, and how this PSOC leads to improved well-being for most members and betrayal for others.

To understand how a PSOC might lead to improved well-being, it is important to consider its key dimensions which represent a developmental sequence:

> (a) Membership – a feeling of belonging or sharing a sense of personal relatedness; (b) Influence - a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group, and of the group mattering to its members; (c) Integration and fulfillment of needs – a feeling that members' needs will be met by the resources received through their membership in the group; (d) Shared emotional connection – the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences (McMillan & Chavis, 1986: p.9).

Building on these four dimensions, Boyd and Nowell (2014) added a fifth dimension: responsibility, which includes "a commitment to the well-being of the group and its individual members" (p. 110).

While all five dimensions are important for establishing a sense of community, the relationship of PSOC to well-being is grounded in the belief that PSOC is created when an individual's needs are fulfilled within the context of the community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In the case of workers in life-and-death professions, the need to become unburdened by the emotions associated with traumatic events is one such need that could potentially be fulfilled by a community. More generally, individuals are likely to feel the need for psychological safety and security, given the physical and emotional dangers associated with life-and-death work. Thus, a PSOC is likely reflect *with whom* members in life-and-death work feel a sense of safety – physical and emotional safety. Regarding emotional safety, the belonging dimension of a PSOC is likely a prerequisite for the type of emotional sharing that we see in feeling safe enough to engage in relational emotional processing. Members are likely to feel safe sharing their traumatic experiences with their community members because of their sense of belonging, commitment to the emotional connection of the community, and their acknowledgment of community responsibility for one another. The more members share, the more likely they are to develop intense emotional bonds (the fourth dimension), which is likely to make sharing within the community easier in the future. This is likely to be true regardless of organizational norms that otherwise discourage discussing emotional responses to traumatic events because membership in the community creates boundaries between protected insiders and others (McMillian & Chavis, 1986). These boundaries provide members with the emotional safety necessary for more open expression of emotions within the community (Bean, 1971; Ehrlich & Graeven, 1971). These boundaries are especially important in life-and-death work and specifically in the profession of police work given the high stakes of one's reputation and career as related to emotional expression of forbidden feelings (as described in Study 1).

Additionally, membership in a community is also likely the shape *how* individuals choose to engage in emotional processing, as they are likely to do so in ways that conform to the norms of their community. The paramedics Tangherlini (1998) observed engaged in informal storytelling with peers to discuss traumatic events rather than through the formal department offering through Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD). Tangherlini found that medics were reluctant to engage in the formal CISD because doing so was seen as a sign of weakness. Instead, medics engaged in "continuous debriefing" (p. 64) through storytelling with peers – a form of relational emotional processing – which allowed members to overcome the emotional burden associated with traumatic calls. In this way, the formality of the CISD as compared to the community-oriented nature of storytelling shaped how paramedics engaged in processing of difficulty events. Furthermore, while paramedic storytelling took place between many interaction partners, the context of the telling (time, place, and audience) shaped the story, its purpose, and the consequences (Tangherlini, 1998). Thus, storytelling within one's community is likely to look different and lead to different outcomes than storytelling with outsiders.

In summary, it is clear that involvement in a community is likely to create a sense of psychological safety that, among other things, will create the opportunity for emotional processing with others, despite organizational norms that would otherwise discourage such emotional expressions. Additionally, a PSOC is likely to influence whether, how, and with whom individuals interact in moments where they need to feel a sense of safety. Yet we know very little about how individuals might come to experience a PSOC and the sense of safety that comes from it when embedded in organizations with strict emotional norms that discourage emotional openness in response to traumatic experiences. Yet, unpacking these is crucial for understanding how a sense of safety and thus, the relational emotional processing observed in Study 1, might emerge in the context of these emotionally constricting norms. Therefore, this study answers the following research questions:

> RQ2: How do individuals come to experience a psychological sense of community with certain others at work, and how does a psychological sense of community shape relational emotional processing of the challenges of work in the context of life-and-death professions?

The importance of physical spaces for relational emotional processing

The emotional connection dimension of PSOC includes an expectation and commitment that community members will share common spaces and time together (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The more interaction points individuals have, the more likely they are to become close and develop a strong community (Allan & Allan, 1971; Festinger, 1950). If community members do in fact engage in relational emotional processing of traumatic events, these interaction points present important opportunities for doing so. Moreover, membership in a community provides the psychological safety to express emotions that might otherwise be discouraged, thus enabling relational emotional processing. Furthermore, it is important to consider the role of the psychological safety regarding the spaces in which these interactions occur. If, for example, the particular space of an interaction between community members is not private or is not solely inhabited by members of the same community, the safety presented by the relational boundaries of the community may not extend to this particular physical space. Thus, a PSOC may not be enough to enable relational emotional processing to work. Rather, the interaction between a PSOC and the space together influence opportunities for relational emotional processing. Safety, thus, must also be a condition of the space in which these interactions occur. This raises the question of how individuals and the communities in which they are embedded come to experience certain spaces as safe.

Organizational literature drawing on a spatial perspective helps to inform this notion of physical space and how spaces may come to be imbued with certain meanings (e.g, safe spaces). While spaces can mean several things, I theorize about space as being bounded and isolated:

> ‘Boundaries’ refer to the bounded nature of space. In the context of organization studies, specific spaces can host organizational activities because their boundaries allow specific actions to take place within them. Boundaries demarcate distinct organizational spaces and can thus determine the inclusion or exclusion of actions and influence organizations and organizing (Weinfurtner & Seidl, 2019: 4).

Spaces as bounded settings have been shown to influence a variety of organizational outcomes. Kellogg’s (2009) study of relational spaces - areas of isolation, interaction, and inclusion - theorized the importance of these spaces for enabling organizational change in a hospital. Another study demonstrated the importance of “experimental spaces” for creating new logging practices in the forestry industry (Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010). More recently, Lee and colleagues (2020) determined that the combination of spaces and interaction scripts were crucial for helping teams establish positive relational dynamics. These bounded spaces create opportunities for individuals to actively listen, respond to one another, suspend judgments, and speak honestly (Bohm, 1990; Isaacs, 1999; Senge, 1990) – behavior that might not be possible other spaces. Thus, considerations of certain isolated spaces, and how spaces interact with other aspects of organizational life, have been recognized as significant enablers of a variety of positive organizational and relational outcomes.

In many of these instances, space was bound by meaningful dimensions that marked one space as separate from another. For example, Kellogg (2009) drew on the notion of “free spaces” from social movement theory which are “small-scale settings…that are isolated from the direct observation of defenders of the status quo and allow for interaction among reformers apart from their daily work” (659). In this way, the physical dimensions of the space do not matter; rather, it is the boundedness of space – in this case bounding one group from another - that establishes it as a meaningful “space”. This separateness or isolation (Weinfurtner & Seidl, 2019) is a common way that organizational scholars have come to understand how spaces become imbued with symbolic meaning.

Relatedly, research has demonstrated that the way individuals come to experience attachment to certain places can be as much about the materiality or location of the place as the symbolic meaning of the place (Cartel, Kibler & Dacin, 2022). Thus, individuals can cultivate a sense of place within physical spaces as they form meaningful attachments to these places (Lawrence & Dover, 2015; Wright et al., 2021). This meaning is sustained as individuals enact a place physically and socially, thus transforming a physical *space* into a *place* (Schneekloth & Shibley, 1995). This place-making tactic (Cartel et al., 2022; Schneekloth & Shibley, 1995) is crucial, moreover, in protecting a meaningful space from outsiders (Dacin et al., 2010).

As bounded physical spaces become imbued with particular meaning (e.g., as safe places), research shows that these spaces invite actions that we would not expect to see outside of them (Weinfurtner & Seidl, 2019). There is extensive research that explores why certain activities take place within these isolated spaces in relation to outside (for a full review, see Weinfurtner & Seidl, 2019). For example, Rao and Dutta (2012) show how religious festivals serve as free spaces (isolated spaces) that allow freedom from the influence of hegemonic powers and can instigate collective action. Similarly, Kellogg's study of relational spaces (2009), these free spaces allowed for collective change that was unlikely to emerge without these free spaces.

Thus, as physical spaces become meaningful places for community interaction, community members are able to act in ways they otherwise would not. In the context of life and death work, these spaces could provide the safety necessary for the relational emotional processing observed in Study 1. Yet, we know little about how this may happen in this context, which leads me to the following research question:

> RQ3: How do organizational members, along with members with whom they share a psychological sense of community, come to identify and/or create safe physical spaces that enable relational emotional processing following traumatic events?

Holding Spaces

The notion of safe space has been shown to play a critical role in the emotional healing process. In a clinical setting, therapists and social workers seek to create a safe environment known as a holding environment (Heller, 2000; Slochower, 2013). This term "holding" draws on Winnicott's (1965) description of positive caregiving relationships between a mother and her infant, as a mother creates safe boundaries that protect the infant and enable the child to experience themselves as valued and secure (Winnicott, 1960). In a therapeutic setting,

> holding creates room. It establishes space in which experiences of self and other deepen... It helps us work effectively with patients who can't tolerate interpretation or relational dialogue. Particularly for our most vulnerable patients, holding facilitates the elaboration and management of emotional experience (Slochower, 2013: p.1).

In this quote and in much of the holding environment literature, space is described as a bounded *psychological setting* where people overwhelmed by their emotional experience can be secured, listened to, and valued by others:

> People deliberately create the **psychological** space in which the task becomes surfacing and working through anxiety. Although less intensive than the holding actions of the mothers and analysts, holding environments at work are reasonably safe places in which people may express and examine their experiences in startling situations (Kahn, 2001: 265; emphasis added).

In this way, a holding environment is often described as a bounded *social* context (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010), rather than a bounded *physical* space. More recently, however, Petriglieri and colleagues found that workers in the gig economy cultivated connections to people and *physical* *spaces* that together created a holding environment for individuals to manage tensions inherent in their work (Petriglieri, Ashford & Wrzesniewski, 2019). Thus, while holding environments are most often considered to be bound by social connections, the social connections can be meaningfully tied to physical places, while the physical dimensions themselves are not necessarily important. For example, in a study of Chicago youth, DaViera and colleagues (2020) found that vulnerable teenagers living in low-income high-crime neighborhoods identified certain "safe" places embedded within an otherwise dangerous context. These spaces were often physical locations such as their home or school purely because of the separation these structures allowed between the youths and the dangerous outside.

It is clear, thus, that physical space can meaningfully influence holding environments. However, in the scholarship on holding spaces, space has heretofore referred only to the "relational matrix" (Applegate, 1997:8) while remaining silent on the actual physical space in which holding takes place. This oversight in the literature opens opportunities to explore the physical spaces in which holding occurs and how individuals come to imbue these spaces as safe for holding.

Taken together, holding environments have been shown to provide the psychological and relational context necessary for holding (Applegate, 1997; Kahn, 2001). Yet this same literature is silent on how spaces – bounded, isolated physical spaces – can emerge, be maintained, and renewed to sustain holding over time. However, connecting these two literatures can inform how if at all holding spaces may be created outside of the therapeutic environment, where individuals must actively seek out spaces that are deemed safe to enact holding. As spaces become infused with the meaning of safe places, it invites holding – holding that is otherwise unwelcome outside the bounds of the safe place.

Holding spaces, thus, are not purely psychological. Holding spaces are created between individuals who, within the bounds of a particular physical space, welcome vulnerability together in an effort to facilitate the containment and interpretation of emotion and difficult events (Shapiro & Carr, 1991; French & Vince, 1999). This interconnection between safety as being both relationally and physically determined is clear in Winnicott's original conception of holding, with the first holding environment being the mother's uterus which holds the baby physically and later the mother's arms holding the baby (Applegate, 1997).

Extending beyond the original caregiving relationship of mother and child, attention to the physical aspect of a holding environment has been acknowledged in social work, "especially in work with…those in major crisis, careful assessment and stabilization of the physical/material holding environment is primary" (Applegate, 1997: 22). However, much of the literature on holding environments takes for granted the physical nature of holding spaces. Perhaps this is a result of decades of scholarship on holding environments in the context of clinical interventions where the physical space itself is taken for granted as the therapist's office. Yet, for organizational scholars who draw on Winnicott's metaphor of holding, the physical spaces within and surrounding organizations cannot be assumed to enable the sense of holding that holding environments afford. In this study, I interrogate this notion of the physical spaces in which holding occurs within the context of organizational life.

Organizations as holding spaces

For any holding space to exist within the organizational context, research suggests that organizational norms will influence, implicitly or explicitly, whether holding is prohibited or encouraged, by making people more or less likely to seek and be receptive to holding, driven by perceptions of psychological safety regarding emotional expression (Kahn, 1993; Kahn, 2001).

Psychological safety, a perception of individuals about the broader context within which they are embedded, refers to a shared belief about an organizational climate in which people are comfortable expressing and being themselves without fear of embarrassment or retribution (Edmondson, 2018). This organizational climate is contained within the physical space the organization inhabits, and thus, the physical organization (e.g., building, structure, facility) itself can become imbued with meaning as either promoting or inhibiting psychological safety. In this way, we can say that organizations themselves provide a holding environment – both physically and socially - when they promote a climate of psychological safety with norms that encourage sharing feelings with others at work, an otherwise interpersonally risky behavior (Pearsall & Ellis, 2011). Organizations that provide holding have norms that create a climate that enhances individual's psychological safety (Newman, Donohue & Eva, 2017) within the physical organizational structure and spaces.

In other words, organizations themselves may (or may not) be holding environments. In Petriglieri and colleagues' (2019) study of gig workers who lack membership to a particular organization, these workers are described as working "in the absence of an organizational holding environment" (132). Following their theorizing, membership in an organization would provide a sense of holding, as it is "a social context that reduces disturbing affect and facilitates sensemaking" (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010: 44). In the absence of organizational holding, they found that gig workers sought out a social context in which to experience the holding they needed to engage in their identity work. Beyond seeking out a social context in which to feel held, these gig workers also sought out physical spaces to which they formed meaningful attachments. These physical spaces became fertile grounds for establishing personal holding environments. Thus, organizational holding provides both the meaningful social context and meaningful physical spaces in which individuals can feel psychologically safe.

In the absence of organizational holding, individuals are left isolated and exposed to the precariousness of their work (Petriglieri, Ashford & Wrzesniewski, 2019). For those in life-and-death work, this means they are vulnerable to both the physical and emotional harm inherent in their work. Literature suggests that in the absence of holding, individuals will react in two possible ways: seeking holding outside of the system where it is being withheld and thus, absent (Goldberg, 1989; Petriglieri, Ashford & Wrzesniewski, 2019), or move toward becoming self-sufficient, leading to a false sense of self-reliance (Modell, 1984; Reinstein, 2013). Returning to literature on emotional processing described in Study 1, this self-reliance is problematic in life-and-death work, as it leads to isolation and a dangerous avoidance of emotional processing (Difede & Barocas, 1999; Litz et al., 1997; Rachman, 1980; Van der Merwe & Hunt, 2019). Yet in both studies of this dissertation, I observed an alternative untheorized path for emotional processing at work that literature would suggest was highly improbable (Kahn, 2001). Despite norms that would seem to prohibit holding spaces from being possible, I observed individuals coming together to create communities of trusted others with whom they created community holding spaces in physical spaces they deemed physically and psychologically safe. This study unpacks how individuals created these community holding spaces within an organization that would seem at the very least to interfere with, if not outright prohibit, holding, and in particular, explores how these physical spaces were deemed safe.

Taken together, safe physical spaces, and more specifically, spaces that create a sense of holding, appear to be an enabling mechanism in relational emotional processing. These holding spaces create the psychological safety necessary for relational emotional processing in life-death-work. For a particular physical space to become a site for relational emotional processing, individuals or communities must have attached meaning (Cartel, Kibler & Dacin, 2022; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001) to that space as a safe place for emotional openness and connection with others. However, there is limited if any research to suggest how, in the context of work, members come to understand and interpret certain physical spaces as safe for discussing emotions. As noted above, the emotional processing literature is largely silent on space. While Kahn's (2001) conceptual work on holding environments at work proposes various relationally-oriented facilitating conditions, there have been no empirical studies to demonstrate how exactly organizational members come to identify, create, and engage within these physical spaces, especially in the absence of an organizational environment that facilitates holding. Therefore, this study addresses the following research question:

> RQ4: In the context of life-and-death work, where individuals are vulnerable to both physical and emotional harm, how do organizational members create a sense of safety (through holding) when embedded in organizations that would seem to prevent it?

CHAPTER 7: STUDY 2 METHODS

Research Approach

The methods for this study allowed me to extend my understanding of relational emotional processing that emerged in Study 1 through further exploration of the influence of both safe others (e.g., community) and safe spaces. As a single case study (Yin, 2003), Study 1 explored how members of one particular organization navigated the emotional realities of routinely traumatic work. While there are strengths of this method such as "understanding of the dynamics present within single settings" (Eisenhardt, 1989: 539), there are also limitations in generalizability (Yin, 2013). In this second study I explored related research questions within a broad sample of informants from one single profession, rather than across multiple professions within one organization as I did in Study 1 (emergency dispatchers and police officers). Additionally, it was not until I had been out of the field after Study 1 for some time that I realized the importance of the moments where members created time and space away from their work to talk with others informally about the difficulties in their work. Therefore, I was able to deepen my understanding of the relational and organizational characteristics that influence these interactions through the use of a revised interview protocol that was informed by Study 1 findings as well as existing literature on community, space, and holding environments/spaces.

My research questions for study 2 asked how individuals engage in relational emotional processing within an organization that would seem to prevent it, and more specifically, how individuals come to identify certain others and certain spaces as "safe" for doing so. To answer these questions, I followed an inductive qualitative approach to examine relational emotional processing in one such profession. Specifically, I sought to develop a model that shows how relational emotional processing opportunities are created and shaped by certain "safe" others and the spaces in which they occur, and qualitative methods are appropriate for revealing how complex events unfold in real-world settings (Chiles, 2003; Creswell, 1998; Langley, 1999). While qualitative methods were well-suited given my research question, an inductive approach was also appropriate as my purpose was not to test theory but to build and elaborate theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), as there is little previous empirical work related to the focus of the research (Creswell, 1998; Eby, Hurst & Butts, 2009; Locke, 2001). More specifically, according to the theoretical grounding for this study, there is very little work that has explored how community and a sense of community might be related to overcoming traumatic events at work (see Bothne & Keys, 2016 for exception). Moreover, the work on physical space and holding environments is unclear regarding how members come to identify and create holding spaces despite organizational norms that would seem to prevent them. The findings from this study help build theory on how individuals who work in organizations that lack a holding environment enact relational emotional processing by creating community holding spaces – safe spaces with safe others to process their events at work.

While preexisting theory shaped my research design, as is commonly seen in theory elaboration (Lee, Mitchell, & Sablynski, 1999; Locke, 2001), I drew on grounded theory methods as I did in Study 1 and thus, data collection and analysis occurred in an iterative fashion (Glaser & Strauss, 1977; Locke, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Early in my data collection and analysis process, I returned to two key literatures to form a theoretical frame for this study: psychological sense of community (addressed in RQ2), and literature on physical space (addressed in RQ3). These literatures provided certain sensitizing concepts (Charmaz, 2006) to explore in my data collection. However, early in my data collection, it became evident that not all law enforcement agencies are alike in terms of how they value emotional expression and discussion about difficult events. Armed with what I observed and learned in Study 1, I was expecting that most agencies would be similar to the GPD in that emotions would be seen as a weakness and that admitting to being emotionally affected carried a risk of being seen as unfit for duty. I was surprised to find that this perception was not uniform across agencies, and that some of the officers I interviewed did not experience these same emotional norms. By using constant comparison throughout data collection and analysis, I came to understand the importance of organizational holding environments and in particular the variation in presence or absence of organizational holding environments for my informants, so I adjusted my protocol to probe further on the presence of organizational holding environments (Locke, 2001). Remaining open to new concepts, I was able to explore emergent themes in my data that I had not predicted including the variation in the presence or absence of organizational holding, the processes of becoming receptive to holding, and for community-level holding spaces that fill individual's needs in the absence of organizational holding.

Context and Sampling Strategy

Inductive qualitative research requires carefully selecting samples that are likely to reveal the dynamics of interest (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As I was interested in extending my findings from Study 1 on members of life-and-death professions, it was important to maintain the focus of my research within a life-and-death profession. While professions that I consider to be involved in life-and-death work include, among others, firefighters, emergency responders, military soldiers, and police officers, I chose to continue research with police officers. The main reason for choosing this profession for Study 2 is that it allowed me to leverage the deep understanding I developed through my ethnographic methods in Study 1 regarding the way of life in police work (Spradley, 1980). With nearly five hundred hours of observation, Study 1 data informed my data gathering in this study in ways that would not be possible if I shifted focus to a different profession. The natural language I have learned through my time in the field helped me phrase my interview questions in a way my informants understood (e.g., inquiring about cruiser cuddles and coffee time). Much of this understanding was developed through trial and error with my informants in Study 1 that was only possible based on the rapport (Rosen, 1991; Seidman, 1998) built over nine months in the field. This was especially important given that ideally, I would have also collected observation data to support my findings in this study, but given the realities of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, observation was not possible.

My sampling strategy in this study extended beyond a single setting and began by following the logic of purposeful sampling (Locke, 2001; Patton, 2001), which involves selecting individuals that best represent the dynamics of interest. I recruited sworn[6] members of law enforcement agencies across the country. This study focused exclusively on members of one profession, those who are considered sworn law enforcement officers. This profession reflects my focus on individuals engaged in life-and-death work and the trauma associated with this kind of work, as indicated by purposeful sampling procedures (Locke, 2001; Patton, 2001). By focusing on uniformed members of law enforcement across the country, rather than within one private police department, my findings of this study are less reflective of the dynamics present solely within one setting. Sampling in this way broadens my understanding of the dynamics of interest beyond a single case study (Yin, 2013). In this way, my initial sampling strategy simultaneously narrowed and broadened my sample of informants as compared to Study 1. From talking with my sample of informants, I came to realize that not all police officers need to create spaces for relational emotional processing. Some officers experienced what literature would call an organizational holding environment, where it was safe to talk about their emotional experiences without fear of stigma or negative professional consequences. Officers who experienced organizational-level holding did not struggle to process their emotions with colleagues; on the contrary, it was a natural experience for them. This presented interesting variance to explore in this study.

---

[6] Sworn law enforcement officers: those who have taken an oath to support the Constitution of the United States, their state, and the laws of their agency's jurisdiction (IACP, 2018). This excludes any support personnel in any law enforcement agency.

I used three key strategies for reaching my target sample of informants: contacting police departments, posting flyers on virtual message boards, and snowball sampling. Interviewee breakdown by recruitment strategy can be seen in Table 3.1. First, I sent emails to 28 police agencies requesting details of my study be shared with the sworn officers of the department. While some of these agencies were chosen to leverage connections from my personal and professional network, some of these were "cold" contacts that I chose to increase geographic diversity in my sample.

[INSERT TABLE 3.1 HERE]

Second, I posted an IRB-approved flyer on law enforcement virtual message boards, discussion rooms, and social media pages. On some pages, I was able to post my flyer directly. On others, such as the Calibre Press Facebook[7] page, I sent a message to the page administrator and requested that they post my flyer on their page. With their agreement, my flyer was shared with thousands of law enforcement officers across the country. This method was most successful for recruiting, as 78% of my sample reported learning of my study from a virtual discussion room/social media page.

---

[7] Calibre Press is a company that conducts law enforcement training in the United States. It is a popular source for training and relevant law enforcement articles on leadership, training, safety, driving, health and fitness, and defensive tactics (www.calibrepress.com)

Lastly, I obtained nearly 14% of my sample through snowball sampling. Through snowball sampling, I was able to leverage my informants' connections (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981) for the purpose of identifying new informants. At the end of each interview, I asked informants to connect me with other potential informants for the purpose of interviewing (e.g., Ladge, Clair & Greenberg, 2012). While this sampling technique is used frequently in the social sciences, it does increase the potential for bias due to the reliance on personal/professional connections (Heckathorn, 1997; 2011). However, as I narrowed the focus of my sample (which I will discuss below), I was able to ask informants if they could connect me to people who met certain criteria relevant for this study. In this way, I was able to target patrol officers (as opposed to higher ranking officers who are not "on the streets") and also target officers at departments where I suspected there was a presence of an organizational holding environment. Thus, while snowball sampling led to a small number of informants, it was especially helpful for accessing key informants in my sample, making it an ideal strategy in this study (Heckathorn, 1997).

As mentioned above, as themes began to emerge from my iterative data collection and analysis process, I shifted to theoretical sampling to refine my understanding of the emerging categories and themes in my data (Charmaz, 2006; Patton, 2001). Specifically, as I learned that certain individuals did not feel that processing their emotions was complicated given the norms present in their department, signaling to me that there may be an organizational holding environment, I was interested in speaking with others in those same departments to see if indeed this was more than one individual's perspective. Similarly, there were a few occasions where I had the opportunity to recruit participants involved in the same life-and-death event and compare the two perspectives and processes. Moving through theoretical sampling was especially useful in clarifying my findings as I approached theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Locke, 2001) to the point where no new categories or themes emerged from my data.

Given the media coverage of police in the time since George Floyd's murder by a Minneapolis police officer, I anticipated that recruiting police officers could be a challenge. This is especially true when recruiting using the strategies detailed above in that there is no opportunity to build rapport before requesting the interview, unlike my process in Study 1. Therefore, I offered interview participants a $10 gift card to the coffee place of their choice, either Dunkin' or Starbucks[8]. Informants were not promised any other incentive from this study beyond the gift card (e.g., report of findings).

Interested participants filled out a brief Qualtrics questionnaire that signaled their permission for me to contact them for interview scheduling. The questionnaire also collected information including participant's geographic region, rank, tenure in law enforcement, department size, and gender.

Data Collection

Semi-structured in-depth interviews. The source of data for this study is fifty-one semi-structured, in-depth interviews with police officers from approximately forty[9] different police agencies across the United States (for a geographic breakdown of participants, see Table 3.2). I chose to interview officers at multiple departments in different parts of the country to account for the greatest variation in department size, geography-specific approaches to policing, and variation in general population (beyond the Northeast where I conducted Study 1).

---

[8] For curious minds, the breakdown of Starbucks to Dunkin was 51% / 49% respectively.

[9] I did not collect department names of all informants to further protect anonymity. Therefore, the number of distinct police agencies is approximate. There are at least seven instances of a shared agency (given snowball sampling technique).

[INSERT TABLE 3.2 HERE]

Initially, I was open to talking to police officers of any rank, from those on patrol to those on the command staff. Patrol officers are those who do the work of police that we typically see portrayed in movies and on television: they are out patrolling their community in either a cruiser, motorcycle, or bicycle, and are the ones responsible for enforcing laws and responding to calls. Alternatively, command staff are those officers who work primarily in the station, overseeing the more administrative tasks of police work. Command staff represent the higher ranks of police work.

Over time, I narrowed my recruitment strategy to focus on officers who spent their days on patrol as patrol officers were 1) more likely to have recently experienced a difficult and/or dangerous event due to their time on patrol (versus desk work), 2) they are not in a position of authority in the department and thus are more bound by the existing norms of the department and 3) they experience the greatest physical isolation given the nature of patrol work. Additionally, I was not confident that reports from command staff would accurately reflect the nature of holding in their department. In several of my interviews with command staff, I heard statements about "changing norms" and "things are improving". However, I was skeptical about these changes and felt that without a corroborating account from a patrol officer at the same department, these may not be accurate representations of the lived experiences of those on patrol. When possible, I supplemented command staff interviews with another lower-ranking officer at the same department. This was only possible in two instances (out of eight total command staff interviews).

As in any profession, rank is not an ideal proxy for tenure, as people can choose to stay in in patrol (lower rank) for an entire career. While I collapsed the variation in rank by focusing exclusively on those working in a patrol capacity, there is still considerable variation in tenure in law enforcement in my sample. For a breakdown of interview participants by rank and tenure in policing, see Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 respectively.

[INSERT TABLE 3.3 and 3.4 HERE]

Following my analysis in Study 1, I did not expect to see any significant influence of gender on responses to difficult events. I was open, however, to seeing if that changed as my population of informants spread beyond one specific department. I aimed to match the gender split in this study according to the national average in policing (approximately 13% female in 2020). Five of my fifty-one interviews were with law enforcement officers who self-identified as female in the Qualtrics registration form, representing approximately 10% of my sample. As I moved through my data analysis (described below), I did not observe any influence of gender on my findings for this study.

All of my interviews were conducted via the Zoom teleconferencing platform. I gave participants the option to participate with video on or off. Nearly 75% of interviewees kept their camera on for the entirety of our interview. The interviews lasted between 40 and 90 minutes, with an average of about 65 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded and professionally transcribed. During the interviews, I requested permission to take notes, in which I would track body language, changes in demeanor, and any visible sign of emotions [e.g., choking back tears, crying, laughing, etc.] which I use to supplement the verbatim quotes in my analysis. All informants allowed me to take these notes during the interviews. I captured these notes and other emerging themes in a contact summary sheet for each participant, following Eisenhardt's (1989) suggestion of creating detailed interview notes containing overall impressions of each interview.

Study 1 sensitized me to the significance of others in navigating the emotional experience of traumatic events as well as the importance of creating space for interactions with others to occur. While some of the questions from the interview protocol from Study 1 regarding navigating difficult events remained, the protocol for this study evolved significantly (Spradley, 1979) to address the role of others and physical spaces in shaping emotional processing interactions at work. Specifically, I included one entirely new section in the protocol that establishes whether or not an individual experiences a sense of community at work. In this section, I worked to understand the role of coworkers in a typical day at work and detail the interaction points in a typical day to determine to what extent informants experience a psychological sense of community (Boyd & Nowell, 2014), how they came to be a part of this community, and how community interacts with one another at work. In doing so, I was able to uncover the discernment processes individuals use to define certain others as safe to be a part of their community.

Additionally, I created a sub-section of questions regarding where informants interact with colleagues on shift and the details about the physical spaces where these interactions take place – both within and external to the physical police department itself. This was important as I explored to what extent the perceived sense of space (Bohm, 1990; Isaacs, 1999; Lee, Mazmanian & Perlow, 2020; Senge, 1990) shapes the types of interactions that are allowed and encouraged in one physical space (e.g., roll call room in the police station) versus another (e.g., cruiser) and also, what makes a certain physical space safe.

Lastly, I remained open to new themes that emerged and refined my protocol as needed (Spradley, 1979). In doing so, I added a subsection around the individual's particular police department – the physical building and the entire collection of people in it – to better understand whether an organizational holding environment was present, and what made the department itself feel safe or unsafe. The final interview protocol for this study is presented in Appendix III[10].

Data Analysis

Similar to the data analysis process of Study 1, I followed the principles of grounded theory building (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to analyze my interview transcripts. This grounded approach allowed me to stay attached to my informants' own experiences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). My analytic efforts were targeted at understanding how if at all individuals come to feel safe in life-and-death work, and what safe means in this context. Through three analytic phases detailed below, two different ways to achieve a sense of safety emerged: safety through feeling invulnerable (achieved through self-sufficiency), or safety through feeling vulnerably held (achieved through creating community holding spaces or through organizational holding). Data analysis occurred in three phases as detailed below.

Phase 1: Analyzing patterns and open coding. The first phase of my analysis began concurrently with data collection. During this time, I followed the principles of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to analyze interview transcripts and in an iterative fashion, moved back and forth between my data and an emerging arrangement of themes (Locke, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A set of general questions (how do individuals come to identify certain others as safe or trusted? How do groups choose the places in which they interact?) guided my research, but as I moved through the data, I was open to adjusting these questions and emergent coding categories based on my developing interpretations of the data. With ATLAS.ti, I used in-vivo codes to label what was happening in my data based on the exact words of my interviewees which allowed me to stay close to their native language. This practice prevented me from abstracting to conceptual categories too quickly in my coding process. The in-vivo codes include rich accounts regarding the search for a sense of safety in life-and-death work.

---

[10] Given my interest in theorizing about interactions between colleagues, observing these interactions first-hand would be an ideal source of data and would also provide incident-related questions for interviews (Whyte, 1984), as I found in Study 1. However, the realities of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic prohibited this kind of observation from occurring at this time. At the time of this writing, similar to when I proposed this Study in the summer of 2021, law enforcement officers around the country are still being urged to maintain a safe distance from the public when possible and minimize unnecessary interactions. I took this into account in the design of my interview protocol by including a narrative account of difficult events and the process that follows in order to collect as much information about these interactions as possible

A key starting point in my coding focused on how informants described their response to difficult events. In doing so, it became clear to me that not all informants experienced similar struggles; some informants felt that processing their emotions following difficult events was unproblematic within their organization whereas most others felt that sharing emotions was a sign of weakness and if shared at all, had to be accomplished carefully within the confines of what they called "safe zones". Given this, I then descriptively coded how informants responded to difficult events, whether or not their organization encouraged them to talked openly about difficult events, and if the organization did not encourage this openness, what steps were involved for individuals to feel safe enough to process their emotions (e.g., what does safety mean in this context?). For example, "stories of being physically disconnected from peers" and "showing emotions to others is a sign of weakness" were open codes associated with organizations that did not encourage openly processing emotions, as opposed to "talking about emotions openly in the station" and "talking freely with anyone about difficult topics" were codes associated with organizations that did encourage open emotional discussions. This open coding allowed me to capture the variation in individual's responses according to whether or not their organization made it possible to openly process emotions or not and how this shaped their navigation through the experience of negative emotions. Through this coding, it became clear when open emotional sharing was discouraged, individuals either avoided emotional processing altogether, as seen in the open code "try not to talk about it with anyone", or individuals reported the need to talk about their event with others, as seen in the open code "need to talk about emotional experiences".

Phase 2: Clustering open codes and moving toward theoretical categories. Following my open coding, I shifted toward clustering the open codes together and naming them into categories (Locke, 2001). For example, I clustered the open codes "I can't do this on my own anymore", "no one can do this on their own", and "it's okay to need other people" into the broad category of "acknowledge facade of self-sufficiency", a construct that captures a shift in informant's self-reliance toward a recognition of needing others.

I also compared within and across categories to better understand their dimensions. Following my emergent understanding in my open coding, I paid particular attention to variation in how responses to negative emotions was shaped by certain organizational norms around perceptions of safety. I then proceeded to review existing literature looking for concepts and frameworks that could help explain what was emerging in my data. In doing so, I came to understand that some officers "avoided emotional processing" while others felt that doing so left them unfulfilled. I clustered these open codes around unfulfilled needs into the category "Acknowledge unmet needs". Similarly, I created clusters around open codes that describe the considerations individuals made as they work to fulfill these needs. In particular, I clustered "people who physically have your back when needed" and "people willing to ask how you're doing and listen" into the category of "available" – individuals who show themselves to be available to help fulfill your unmet needs. Through this clustering, it became evident that the threat of physical harm and emotional harm are intricately intertwined and inseparable. These physical and emotional vulnerabilities together presented challenges to workers' sense of safety in this setting and focused my attention on understanding what safety means in this context. This led to a broadening of my theoretical categories to include categories related to physical needs and physical safety.

Phase 3: Aggregating theoretical arguments. With these broad theoretical categories capturing the main themes of my data, I analyzed the relationships between these categories to expose the underlying framework of the categories; that is, what is the story that these categories tell about how members respond to negative emotions. I began by drawing the categories on a white board and trying different configurations of relationships amongst them. As I approached a configuration that I felt was capturing the story in my data, I reconnected with several of my informants to engage in member checks. I also returned to the literature to see whether the emerging story can be explained by the literature or not.

Following this iterative process of white board conceptualization, member checks, and reviews of literature, I came to understand that how police officers process their emotional trauma is directly influenced by the presence or absence of an organizational holding environment – where a holding environment provides a particular sense of safety necessary for officers to openly share and process their emotions with others at work. For officers who work in organizations that provide holding, emotional processing can happen anywhere with anyone – it is unproblematic, uncomplicated, and unthreatening. Yet that was not the case for the majority of my informants (84%) who instead reported organizational norms that complicate what it means to be safe in this context – both physically and emotionally. Thus, I came to conceptualize the categories "physical isolation" and "emotion as weakness" as determinants of the aggregate category absence of organizational holding. Given my particular research focus on how relational emotional processing occurs despite norms that would seem to prevent it, I focused my analytic framework on the responses to negative emotions for my informants who I coded as working in an organization with an absence of organizational holding, in search of whether and how individuals in these organizations created some kind of sense of safety. For the remaining 16% of my sample who experience organizational holding, I aggregated codes around this presence of organizational holding, as described below.

My analysis revealed seven aggregate categories that capture my conceptual codes, as seen in Figure 3.1 (e.g., Absence of Organizational Holding…etc.). I will briefly define each aggregate category and conceptual sub-category from Figure 3.1 below and explore how I came to understand each of these. In the following definitions, I indicate aggregate categories with underlining and conceptual sub-categories clustered within in quotation marks.

Presence of Organizational Holding. Representing 16% of my sample, some officers described working in law enforcement agencies that had an organizational holding environment (Presence of Organizational Holding), which I define as an organization that facilitates the containment and interpretation of negative emotional experiences through norms, structures, practices, and policies. Through my analysis, it was clear that this presence of organizational holding was driving by two conceptual sub-categories: a “perceived psychological safety”, where members are comfortable expressing and being themselves, and a “PSOC with the organization”, where members feel a sense of community at the level of the organization itself (rather than within a smaller subset of the organization as I observed with the majority of my sample).

Absence of Organizational Holding. The great majority of my sample (84%) reported working for organizations that I came to understand as lacking an organizational holding environment (Absence of Organizational Holding), which I define (Figure 3.1) as organizations that either implicitly or explicitly interfere with the containment and interpretation of negative emotional experiences. These organizations exist in stark contrast to those with organizational holding, in two ways. First, members reported a norm I conceptualize as “sharing emotions was a weakness”, rather than acceptable as it was for those experience the psychological safety of organizational holding. Exacerbating this lack of psychological safety, members experienced organizational norms and structures that encourage what I refer to in my coding as “physical isolation”, where members are physically disconnected from one another throughout their shift.

Salience of Lack of Psychological Safety. Process A of Figure 3.2 is triggered as members face negative emotional experiences – events that trigger negative emotional responses. These triggers increase the Salience of (a) Lack of Psychological Safety inherent in the absence of organizational holding. Where psychological safety would encourage individuals to be comfortable expressing themselves, I observed that in these organizations, “members don’t care about each other”, “conflict is problematic/avoided” rather than tolerable and potentially constructive, accompanied by perceptions that it is “not safe to express oneself openly” at work.

Conform to Organizational Norms (suppress emotional expression). This heightened salience of a lack of psychological safety shapes individual responses to the negative emotional triggers in ways that Conform to Organizational Norms. This conformance is expressed in three ways: by “suppress(ing) emotional experiences”, “engage(ing) in gallows humor following tragic events”, and “keep(ing) things to myself”, all of which keep individuals isolated, both physically and emotionally.

Project Safety in self-sufficiency. Strict conformance to these norms perpetuates the notion that an individual is self-sufficient, and thus, can overcome this lack of psychological safety by feeling, or at least Project(ing) Safety in Self-Sufficiency. By conforming to the norms that encourage physical isolation and limit emotional disclosure, individuals over-rely on themselves and “present self as self-sufficient”. For some, however, they come to question for themselves “is sufficiency is enough?”. This questioning is driven by one’s self-awareness of needs and ability to meet those needs without help. I find that for some of my informants, this questioning triggers a break from Process A and begins Process B. Process B begins at the point individuals acknowledge the façade of self-sufficiency which I define as members becoming aware that conforming to the norms of the organization does not actually meet their needs.

Creating Interaction Opportunities. Following this acknowledgment of the façade of self-sufficiency, individuals begin “acknowledging need for others” to feel safe at work. Yet, organizational norms encourage physical isolation. To overcome this norm, individuals actively Create(ing) Interaction Opportunities for the purpose of determining who might be able to help meet their unfulfilled needs.

Individual Trust Assessment. Given the norms that exist in the absence of organizational holding, individuals must assess for themselves who in their organization can be trusted to help fulfill these needs. I observed that individuals draw on their interactions with others (described above) to assess individuals on three conceptual categories, each of which is assessed on both a physical and emotional dimension: 1) “available” – defined as whether an individual has demonstrated themselves as trusted to be available to meet your needs, 2) “mortality salience” – defined as whether an individual is perceived to respond to life-and-death situations in a manner deemed appropriate by my informant, and 3) “mindset/approach” – defined as whether an individual is perceived as having a similar mindset to being a police officer and how to accomplish the job. Those who are available, respond to life-and-death situations appropriately, and have a similar mindset are deemed trusted in these Individual Trust Assessments. When others are deemed trusted, a PSOC may eventually be created (through continuation of Process B). When others are deemed not trustworthy, it triggers a return to a salience of a lack of psychological safety with those untrusted others and a continuation of Process A.

Sharing Experiences with Community of Trusted Others. Over time, individuals reported sharing experiences with trusted others in ways that lead to a sense of belonging to a group, the first dimension of a PSOC. This is the first sign that a PSOC has been created, as individuals experience a "Sense of Group Boundary" and begin to identify as a group/community and isolate their interactions from others outside the group. These "routine interactions with trusted others over time" become the basis for experiencing a psychological sense of community at work.

Experiencing a PSOC at work. As individuals continue sharing experiences with trusted others, a PSOC is likely to emerge such that those who experience trust with others come to Experience a PSOC at work. This experience of a PSOC reflects existing scholarship regarding the structure of a PSOC: "membership", "influence", "needs integrated and fulfilled", "emotional connection", and "responsibility to others". For some, they eventually experience "PSOC Loss/Betrayal", as they either become disconnected from their community members naturally (e.g., shift changes, retirement, etc.) or through acts perceived as trust betrayals. When this happens, it triggers a return to a heightened salience of a lack of psychological safety (Process A).

Community Place-Making. Given the physical isolation experienced in an absence of organizational holding, community members must work to find spaces within which they can interact. As community members search for spaces to interact with community members, I observed four criteria that help shift any physical space (as isolated, bounded space) into a meaningful place for community interaction (Figure 3.1). These criteria revolve around what makes a space feel safe: 1) “presence invited/non -threatening”, which I define as spaces in which officers feel welcome and the public does not feel threatened, 2) “ allows stealthy presence”, which I define as spaces where individuals can be veiled or hidden and their conversations cannot be overheard, 3) “limited potential for disruption”, which I define as spaces that limit potential disruptions from outsiders during community interactions, and 4) “maintain vigilance”, whereby a space allows for officers to be alert so they can swiftly respond to developing situations from that space. It is not these criteria that make a space meaningful; rather, it is the community interacting in these spaces – the enacting within the space – that gives a space meaning. As community members interact within these spaces they have deemed safe, they are engaging in Community Place-Making (Figure 3.1): “developing a socialized meaning of place…(which) is key to the ongoing emergence, maintenance, renewal, and sustenance of place over time” (Cartel et al., 2022: 351). Communities often had several unique and distinct spaces for community interaction, from parking car to car (i.e., cruiser cuddles in Study 1), to particular coffee shops, parking lots, and even park benches. As community members interact in these spaces and continue to experience them as psychologically safe (i.e., they can behave in ways that run counter to organizational norms), these spaces themselves become safe, as these situated interactions influence people’s understanding of the place (Cartel et al., 2022). In this way, particular “space(s) become meaningful place(s)”.

Community Holding Spaces. Taken together, community members interacting within safe places form community holding spaces (Figure 3.1). I define community holding spaces as temporary holding places that meet community members’ unfulfilled needs regarding psychological and physical safety in ways that strengthen the community’s PSOC. These community holding spaces are created when members of a community interact in the places the community has deemed safe (through their place-making efforts) in ways that meet community member needs for safety. As community members continually gather together in these spaces, opportunities are created to continue sustaining community holding. I observed two key outcomes of the creation and sustaining of community holding spaces: 1) these community holding spaces help to “fulfill unmet needs” (including that for psychological safety) within their community that were unfulfilled through conformance to organizational norms. This meeting of member needs is crucial for the second and final outcome: 2) it “strengthens PSOC”, or in the words of my informants, “strengthens our bonds”. Thus, a PSOC is crucial for creating community holding spaces and the more these spaces are enacted, PSOC is further strengthened.

Figure 3.1 illustrates how I moved from open coding (left) to key theoretical themes (middle) and finally to more aggregate dimensions (right). Although the diagram suggests linearity, my data analysis process was iterative, as I engaged in constant comparison between my data, the literature, my white board illustrations of the emerging framework, and member checks with informants. This analysis created the basis for the process models presented in Figure 3.2 and detailed in the following section.

Before exploring my findings in detail, it is important to acknowledge what I mean by a sense of safety in this study. This safety is not purely around emotional content, as it was in Study 1. I realized my informants experienced both physical and emotional vulnerability. However, these vulnerabilities are not solely a direct result of the life-and-death nature of their work, but rather, are amplified by two organizational norms that maintain an absence of organizational holding: physical isolation from others and being alone with one’s negative emotions. These norms complicate the sense of safety that came naturally for those who experience organizational holding.

CHAPTER 8: STUDY 2 FINDINGS

The findings of this study center on the experiences of the police officers in my sample who work for organizations that they experience as lacking organizational holding (Absence of Organizational Holding in Figure 3.1). These organizations that either implicitly or explicitly interfere with the containment and interpretation of negative emotional experiences. In the absence of organizational holding, where norms encourage physical isolation and suppression of emotional experience (Figure 3.1 - theoretical categories), I observed one process toward a sense of psychological safety that is built on a foundation of self-sufficiency, as seen in in the top part of Figure 3.2 (Process A). Following this process, an individual's experience of a negative emotional situation trigger will make salient the lack of psychological safety inherent in the absence of organizational holding. This lack of safety will influence an individual to conform to the norms that encourage an avoidance of emotional processing with others and influence them to remain alone with their emotions. Such avoidance and loneliness perpetuate the notion that safety is possible by relying on the self (rather than through and with others).

However, for some officers this safety through self-sufficiency was acknowledged as only a façade that they maintained to conform with the norms of the organization, which triggers the Process B in Figure 3.2, that of creating and sustaining a PSOC in community holding spaces. In this process, I found individuals work to create a PSOC with trusted others by drawing on their shared experiences and assessing others' trustworthiness (see Figure 3.2). Once a PSOC is established, community members together engage in place-making as they identify certain spaces as safe. By interacting in those spaces, community members transform these safe spaces into meaningful places for community engagement. In the following sections, I will unpack these findings and develop the relationships between my aggregate constructs depicted in Figure 3.2[11]. In doing so, I will show how these findings contribute to an understanding of how individuals may come to experience a sense of psychological safety in the absence of organizational holding environments.

The Presence or Absence of Organizational Holding Environments

Across my sample of informants, there was clear variance in organizational norms around whether or not it was seen as normative to openly discuss emotions and whether individuals felt comfortable expressing themselves with others at work. Through my analytic process, I came to understand that this difference is best conceptualized as the difference between whether or not an organization facilitates or interferes with one's ability to feel held – whether an organization has a holding environment or not. While I focus my analytic framework on the overwhelming majority of my sample (84%) who do not experience organizational holding, it is important to first establish what organizational holding is and how this manifested for the remaining 16% of my informants.

Presence of Organizational Holding

The majority of the police officers in this study described working for police organizations with emotional norms similar to that of the GPD, where negative emotions are seen as a sign of weakness and expression of emotion may lead someone to be deemed unfit for duty. Yet, it was through descriptions of dissimilar organizations that I came to understand the significance of these norms. Some of my informants (16%) worked for organizations with very different emotional norms. As patrolman Gerry describes:

---

[11] In the quotes throughout, all names have been changed to pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of my informants. In certain situations, I slightly altered pieces of some quotes, without altering the meaning, to further protect anonymity.

> We're at the forefront with our department. We have one of the leading peer assistance teams that's become a model across the nation. We've paid a lot more attention to the impact of cumulative events and we now have two clinicians that our department contracts with to provide an environment where we can have complete privacy and confidentiality. And people use it because we've accepted them [clinicians] as trusting and safe. They even come to the scenes with us sometimes and having that support is huge…I feel like I can talk to pretty much anyone about anything. We've all been through the same things, we're all doing the same job, so I think I could talk to anyone about that [difficult event] whenever I needed to.

In these organizations, individuals can be said to feel "held" by their organization. This organizational holding environment facilitates opportunities to openly explore, process, and interpret negative emotional experiences. This openness and comfort with expressing and presenting one's authentic self are a result of individuals in these organizations perceiving a sense of psychological safety (as seen in Figure 3.1). I heard similar stories from other informants along with the recognition that their department was "different than the norm" in the way they handled officer mental health and discussions of negative emotions:

> I can talk to pretty much anybody about whatever I have going on. I'm free to do that and I mean, other guys do too I'd say. It's not really a place where you have to hold back or watch what you say. It's not like this at [previous agency], like I was saying. That whole bravado thing is, well, frankly it's bullshit and we're better off. [Sam]

Thus, these organizations provided an organizational holding environment where members felt psychologically safe despite the precarious nature of their work: "it feels pretty safe around here. We all look out for one another on and off the streets. It comes pretty natural I guess." (Gerry).

Relatedly, officers who experienced organizational holding reported experiencing a PSOC with most everyone in their organization:

> I'd say it's not cliquey here, especially not like at other places. We all do lunch together, or I mean whoever's on shift, we'll do lunch or meetup or what have you. You can get together with pretty much anyone and you know that they've got your back for whatever you need…no, it's not just a few of us unless, I mean, if people are busy on a call or whatever. But no, it's not like us and them. It's all of us together. [Fran]

This was a stark contrast to what I observed in Study 1, where members of the GPD reported widespread distrust, with the exception of those in their small group or clique. Others who experienced organizational holding shared similar reports that "this department is important to me and the cop I am now. [The department] has done so much for me and I thank my lucky stars every day that I get to be a part of this community" (George). Through this and other statements, it became clear that George experienced a PSOC at work, where the organization itself is the community.

Taken together, in the presence of an organizational holding environment that facilitates the open exploration, processing, and interpretation of negative emotional experiences, members experience both psychological safety and a PSOC with the organization. Since this experience was shared by such a small percent of my sample, the remainder of my findings focus on the experience of the majority of my sample, those who work in organizations that lack a holding environment.

Absence of Organizational Holding

The remaining officers in my sample (84%) worked for organizations that lacked an organizational holding environment. In these organizations, open discussion of emotion was not the norm, similar to the GPD. As Tim describes,

> Unfortunately, most of my colleagues, well me too, we don't talk about the difficult calls. And then even, even amongst my shift, I want to be fairly open but like, you can't. Especially at the station. Our station is recorded so not much is said in the station. It's just not safe.

As can be seen, Tim has a desire to be more open, but is aware that doing so, even with his shift mates, it is not perceived as "safe". Safety in this way, depends on how, where, and with whom you choose to discuss difficult events. This salience of a lack of safety is driven by the absence of an organizational holding environment that would otherwise contain the experience and interpretation of emotion As Alex describes,

> I mean, they do the obligatory after any kind of critical incident, but my boss is known for showing up at the briefing and saying 'you're all set right? Everyone's all set, right? And then he walks away. So the real talk never happens when the boss is around, you know what I mean?...[if I ever talk about it with anyone] it's not really in the station, you know. Every cop thinks you know, that people are listening and so yeah, I never liked to talk in the station. (Alex)

For officers in these organizations, this lack of organizational holding made it psychologically unsafe to openly discuss their feelings about difficult events, thus calling to question what safety is and how it is achieved in this context. Compared to those officers who worked in organizations with a holding environment, achieving a sense of safety required effort.

Physical Isolation. In the absence of a holding environment, many of the police officers reported that a key challenge for them in this line of work is the physical isolation from their coworkers. As described in Study 1, police work is almost entirely accomplished in the field, away from the department itself. Also, given police shortages across the United States, police work is largely accomplished in single-person cruisers, despite the dangers this presents. Thus, isolation is inherent in the design of police work. Yet, this isolation was only problematic for the officers who lack organizational holding. For these officers, physical isolation heightened the sense of precarity in this work:

> Depending on what area you're assigned to I might not even see another car the whole shift unless I go out of my way to. Like if you watch a show or a movie and it has police officers in it and they're all like, they're all together and get along. Yeah, it's not like that. It's lonely. You're alone most of the time, some days all day. It makes it really hard to feel like you're gonna have backup when you literally see no one else all day. [Tim]

Some officers actually felt like their department was intentionally creating this sense of isolation:

> Sometimes [coworker] and I'll meet up and chat about whatever and if the Duty Sup[ervisor] sees us, he bitches. Pissed off because apparently, we're supposed to do one of the most dangerous jobs with no interaction with anyone else. It has gotten pretty

> ridiculous lately. It's not like we're…gossiping about our love lives. We're just trying to be human for a hot minute but that's frowned upon these days. [Van]

While it is clear why physical isolation would heighten one's salience of the physical vulnerabilities in the life-and-death work of law enforcement, it also amplified the salience of emotional vulnerability following difficult events. Billie shared with me the isolation experienced in the weeks, months, and years following an incident where he shot and killed a suspect in what they call a "good shoot" – meaning it was justified by external evaluators:

> After that [the shooting], they shipped me off to a desk until the investigation and courts were done their thing. Took my gun right away - protocol for testing and whatnot. I couldn't go back to my station or my people – not allowed. I had a desk in a building with people who didn't know me and I didn't know them. There was no debriefing back then. Literally just on the desk. There was no one to talk to about what happened. Maybe they wanted it that way. But I did nothing for two and a half years and it wasn't even questionable [the shooting]. This – it's what's normal. It was like the department was like 'I'm gonna hide you forever'…How do you ever get over something like that when you're hidden away? Now I'm back at the department and I don't know anyone. So yeah I killed a guy, it was a good shoot, and no one here even knows about it now so how I can talk about it? [Billie]

Thus, the experience of physical isolation heightens the salience of both the physical and emotional dangers in life-and-death work, presenting a challenge to one's sense of safety. This was coupled with the norm that sharing emotions following difficult events is a sign of weakness.

Sharing emotion as weakness. Similar to my findings in Study 1, individuals in the organizations that lacked a holding environment were those who perceived that sharing emotions would be perceived by others as a sign of weakness. Following an informative interview with Jim, I asked if he would be willing to connect me with anyone else at his department. He responded, "yeah we don't, nobody talks about, you don't talk about your feelings. You're in a place where you can't be weak. I won't even tell them [I'm talking to you], they'll make fun of me". Jim's organization had a particular disdain, as he described it, for sharing emotions.

Relatedly, at least in his own internal processing and sensemaking, was the fact that over his career, he'd lost several[12] colleagues to suicide. Others reported that their organizations expected them be to robotic in regards to their emotion: "there's so many people here that think we're not supposed to be human and that we're not supposed to react and that we don't feel and it's…yeah you can't talk about that. Gotta be the robot" (Jarrod). Similarly, Billie reported that "most of the people are on robot mode. So, you come in, no emotion, just show up". This robot mode was described as "the organization's defense against admitting we're human – we feel, we're scared, and we fucking care". Without sharing, and exacerbated by their physical isolation, individuals are left alone with their intense emotional experiences following negative events.

Scholarship on organizational holding environments suggests that in the absence of competent holding, individuals are likely to over-rely on self-sufficiency (Kahn, 2001; Reinstein, 2006). There was evidence of this in my data, as those who conform to the two norms that sustain the absence of organizational holding (physical isolation and sharing emotions is a sign of weakness) remain isolated from others and thus, do not come to experience a PSOC. Instead, they continue following Process A in Figure 3.2, which I will describe below.

Process A: Individual Conformance to Norms of Self-Sufficiency

In organizations that lack a holding environment, individuals are left without the psychological safety necessary to process their emotions openly at work. When faced with negative emotional experiences in these organizations, I find that individuals will move through a process of conforming to norms that encourage self-sufficiency, as detailed in Process A of Figure 3.2. Before stepping through each part of Process A in the subsections that follow, I will demonstrate how this process unfolds for one of my informants, Billie. Billie is a patrol officer who works for a large municipal police department. Billie's emotional reaction following an unsuccessful revival of a victim of a drug overdose triggers (*negative emotional experience*) a heightened *salience of the lack of psychological safety* in his department. In response, Billie reacted in ways that *conform to organizational norms* (which discourage expressing your emotions). For Billie, this meant suppressing his negative emotions associated with the event. Further, Billie projected to others that he was unaffected by the event and thus, was secure in his self-sufficiency (*project safety in self-sufficiency*). Over time, Billie reflected on his reaction to this event and felt that relying on himself was enough and thus, he continued to conform to the organizational norms and suppressed his emotions associated with this event (*self-awareness: is self-sufficiency enough?*). In the sections that follow, I will provide further accounts that provide evidence of Process A (Individual Conformance to Norms of Self-Sufficiency) depicted in the top part of Figure 3.2.

---

[12] I refrained from including the exact amount of suicides because it is a devastatingly high number that has been reported on in the news, which could lead to a compromise of Jim's anonymity.

Trigger: Negative Emotional Experiences

Similar to Study 1, my informants reported an array of events that trigger negative emotions, including reporting to the suicide scene of their own family member, a domestic homicide where the young children witnessed their mother killed by their father, momentarily reviving someone following a drug overdose who later died, and the death of a fellow officer. These events trigger the start of Process A, as these events increase the salience of a lack of psychological safety. As one example of a negative emotional trigger, I will share an in-depth account of one such event that triggers intense emotions for Sonny:

> I get a call about some kids waving guns around and it's 11 o'clock at night and they're right off Main St. which is a haven of prostitution and guns and gangs. So, we got like four or five kids waving guns around in an alley behind a house where just a couple weeks back we had gang shootings. I roll up there and another car is there so we setup a plan, block off the alley on all sides and then we'd catch them. But they take off in every different direction and then it's a foot chase and we're trying to catch them. Adrenaline is

> super high, trying to work on tactical breathing all the while thinking I'm gonna have to fucking smoke this kid geez. He couldn't be more than 13 or 14 years old. And he takes a wrong turn and runs into a dead end. And I know it's a dead end because it's where I patrol and I know he had no place to go. So, I draw down on him. And it's a lot of back and forth yelling because of all the other chases still going on and and [sic] I yell for cover asking for help. And I felt like we're there for an hour yelling at each other before he finally gets down. I was ready to pull. It was just that extra, extra millimeter and I was going to have to kill him. And I can still see him. Smell the alley. All of that. It still sticks with me. Do you know how it feels to almost kill someone? Shitty. I have no other words. Fucking shitty.

Despite what would seem like a positive outcome in this case, Sonny described still being haunted by this event. Through his story, Sonny took several pauses, and apologized as he choked back tears. Sonny was one of many informants who was brought to tears as they recounted the details of particularly difficult events. Of my 51 interviews, every single person was able to identify at least one event that they experienced as difficult - as affecting them emotionally. In describing the range of negative affect experienced, informants reported feeling "deeply saddened", "fucking scared", "fucking shitty" as we saw with Sonny, "devastated", and an array of other negative feelings.

For the majority of my informants, these intense emotional experiences were an expected part of their work in this life-and-death profession. While an expected part of their work, these experiences were still deeply felt by my informants. Informants who lacked an organizational holding environment reported responding to these events in ways that conformed to the norms of their organization.

Salience of Lack of Psychological Safety

These negative emotional experiences trigger an increased salience of the lack of psychological safety inherent in the absence of organizational holding. Contrary to the organizations with holding environments, those who worked in the absence of organizational holding reported feeling "unsafe" regarding their emotional experiences:

> What you gotta understand is that police work is tricky – tricky business. We are responsible for upholding the law and upholding this image. To do that, we have to project that image all the time…not just with the public but around the other guys too. If you show anything else, the vultures come out and they tear you apart and eat you alive. They eat you alive…I've seen it. I've seen it happen. (Rosario)

These vultures were colleagues who Rosario felt were sitting at the ready waiting to take advantage of any sign of vulnerability. In the absence of psychological safety, acknowledging and expressing one's vulnerability at work is risky. Another informant stated, "not at roll call, not in the locker room, no. You can't talk about this stuff in the open like that or people will start to question your ability to do this job" (Erik). This perceived lack of psychological safety stems from perceived organizational norms that sharing emotions is a sign of weakness, similar to the findings of Study 1. The salience of this lack of psychological safety is amplified following negative emotional triggering events as individuals consider how to navigate their emotions.

Conform to Organizational Norms (suppress emotional expression)

In an effort to conform to their organizational norms, some informants reported avoiding processing the events with others. Informants accomplished this in two ways: deflecting their emotions through the use of gallows humor and/or by suppressing their emotions entirely.

Gallows humor. Gallows humor or dark humor is often cited as a coping mechanism in desperate or hopeless situations (Coughlin, 2002; Craun & Bourke, 2014; Maxwell, 2003). It is humor that makes light of or fun of life-threatening or devastating situations. As Alex describes,

> Like we could go to like a horrific car wreck you know where someone gets like decapitated or like crushed in a car. And when we're together after, like in shift briefing, yeah, it's bad taste and it's actually terrible but it's just black dark humor. Like it's not funny that the person was killed. It's not. You know that it's not. So, when you when you really think about it it's terrible but it's always been like a coping mechanism for cops. Somebody will make like a you know, an off-color joke about like a death scene and people laugh and it's almost like people are coping with it, you know. But there's not ill intent, it's more like you don't want to just sit there in silence, you know it's just the way we deal when we can't really deal.

The officers who reported engaging in gallows humor did so mostly in larger groups at roll call or situation debriefings (as opposed to the interactions with smaller groups which I will discuss in later sections). In this way, gallows humor is a way to acknowledge the difficulty and magnitude of the event with those around you, without admitting to being personally affected or specifically seeking anyone out to discuss the event. In this way, gallows humor was a conversation ender, and did not lead to ongoing conversation about the event.

Emotional suppression. Alternatively, officers reported suppressing their emotional experiences entirely. For example, following Sonny's near-shooting encounter with the teenager, he was expected to finish his shift. To do so, Sonny "ignored [it] for the rest of the shift because I had another five hours of answering calls. I just kind of had to sort of feel numb to it. Then that numb stays with you and you just keep it away". Others shared that they "whatever the word is I can't think of it now, but I just keep it inside" (Jamie). Some even seemed to take pride in their ability to suppress their emotions. As Sol describes,

> I'm pretty good at like, I don't want to say suppressing things but it's sort of like that. I'll remember it, but it doesn't like, it doesn't openly appear to affect me if that makes any sense. I used to remember their name and I used to remember all that but, at some point, I decided to forget it. I think that comes from like, keeping it to yourself for so long. So it's just sort of a mentality you just keep it to yourself and not talk about it and it just goes away. I mean, I guess it doesn't since I can still tell you about it, but it's mostly away.

Sol's decision to forget was an effort to conform to the norms of the organization that discourage open emotional expression. His ability to do so, thus, demonstrated his competence in this organization, and specifically, his ability to move past difficult events at work on his own. Similarly, following an event that Jarrod was involved in with a fellow officer, he compared his reaction to hers as a way to reaffirm his ability to do this on his own:

> I try not to let them mess with me or I'm so royally screwed in in the head that it just doesn't mess with me I don't know… And I'm just like, am I supposed to be feeling some sort of way about this, I don't really. Do I need to be you know I'm not really sure if I'm

> supposed to be feeling something, but clearly this is affecting you and I don't know if this is normal, but yeah. I just haven't had anything that at least consciously has, for lack of a better term, keeps me up at night. Like I said that's I don't know if that's a good thing or bad thing if that's indicative that I need to be talking to us a mental health professional, but I think pushing things down works for me. I seem to be doing just fine on my own.

Jarrod expresses a sense of accomplishment in his self-reliance versus his fellow officer who needed help dealing with a particular event. Because he was able to "push things down" on his own, Jarrod missed an opportunity to connect with a fellow officer over this event. As Jarrod and other officers conform to the norms and avoid emotional processing, they limit the opportunities to develop of a PSOC with organizational members.

Project Safety in Self-Sufficiency

In an effort to conform to the norms of isolation inherent in the absence of organizational holding, individuals who experience negative emotions avoided processing their emotions openly in the organization. Remaining disconnected in these challenging times interfered with individual's ability to experience a PSOC with their organizational members. While this further complicated an individual's sense of psychological safety, I observed that this bolstered members' perception of being self-sufficient:

> [Following a difficult event] I didn't want to, the biggest issue for me was that I didn't want somebody else to perceive that I needed help. I always seem to be somebody that can do it all. I call myself the Ghetto MacGyver. I can fix just about anything. Well I can fix a lot of things with almost nothing and I just. It's hard for me to imagine anyone seeing me any other way, and once you ask for help with something like they, it's hard to think that people would still respect you. [Dan]

For Dan, his self-sufficiency was tied to his image as a respectable police officer. Others felt that relying on themselves made them a better, more responsive, police officer:

> You know, being shot at was definitely a crazy event. But it was my job to be there. And what kind of person would I be if I ran away to get help? Then I shouldn't be doing this job in my opinion…and it has affected me in a positive way. It definitely bothers me but. I think like I said I keep it close to my heart, private from everyone, because it reinforces why I do this to me. That's no one else's business. I know now that I can do this on my

> own, which is damn good since I'm on my own 12 hours a day in this godforsaken town. But, knowing I did that, I withstood that without anyone else. Damn. Now I know I can do it again. [Wallace]

Self-sufficiency, thus, becomes an armor that individuals rely on to feel safe in the absence of a PSOC and the psychological safety that comes with it.

Is Self-Sufficiency Enough? A Matter of Self-Awareness

Strict conformance to the organizational norms in these organizations prompts individuals to establish a sense of safety through self-sufficiency. As described in the opening example of Billie and the victim of drug overdose, self-sufficiency was deemed satisfactory, and thus, Billie continued in Process A.

Some individuals, however, came to question whether this self-sufficiency was enough. Through self-reflection and heightened self-awareness[13], many of my informants described how they came to acknowledge that safety in self-sufficiency was not enough given three personal acknowledgments: their (unprocessed) emotions become disruptive to work, various individual needs are unmet via self-sufficiency alone, and a general awareness of the issues with conforming to self-sufficiency.

Emotions as disruptive to work. First, many of informants reported becoming aware (at some point in time) that avoiding emotional processing (though suppression or gallows humor) was not effective. Specifically, they describe how emotionally-evocative events became disruptive to their work and/or home life, despite attempts to avoid processing with others. One officer who was involved in the rescue mission at a particularly horrific fire described,

> I guess you know, it, it did eat at me or whatever you know. [gets choked up – pauses – tears] That's why I eventually brought it up. It just started eating at me all the time. I couldn't block it out anymore. I couldn't drive by that house but it was in my zone so how could I do my job? [Clay]

---

[13] This was not a result of my interview with these individuals. It was something they came to acknowledge at some earlier point in time that they reflected on and shared with me.

For Clay, this event was especially challenging and he described to me that you "don't always understand why one eats at you and another doesn't. It sneaks up on you". This sentiment was echoed by several other informants who described often feeling shocked and surprised by the events that become disruptive. This was especially true for Gray who had a long career in the military before becoming a police officer. For Gray, however, the in-the-line-of-duty death of a fellow officer was a particularly disruptive event:

> I fought in wars. I never thought anything I'd see on the streets here would compare but… this. Seeing his wife and family at that funeral. When you're serving, you don't really see that part. You saw your buddy die but you didn't see what happened next. This, it was intense. Intense is the best way I can describe it I mean, it's something I had never experienced, despite all the losses ever experienced in my life. I couldn't keep going the way I was.

When this happens, officers realized they have to move beyond avoiding emotional processing and try something different. As Mattie describes, "I thought I had it under control and then you know one day it hits me, comes [swooshing sound], random! I started dreaming about it – awake, asleep, and something like that you know, that'll prompt me to want to talk about it". Thus, for officers who experienced emotions as becoming disruptive to work, it prompts them to reconsider the status quo response indicated in Process A (avoiding emotional processing) which maintains their perception of self-reliance. Following this, officers began reflecting on their various unmet needs.

Acknowledge unmet needs. Second, when officers found that certain emotional experiences disrupted their ability to do their job, it triggered an acknowledgement of the challenges associated with over-relying on self-sufficiency. In particular, officers noted particular needs that are left unfulfilled when organizational norms pressure one to be self-sufficient: emotional support, expression of self, physical safety, and physical connection.

The first unfulfilled need officers reported is that of emotional support. Strict conformance to the norms that sustain the absence of a holding environment, where sharing emotions is seen as a sign of weakness, officers acknowledged their need to deviate from this norm and both share their feelings and be heard. As Tim describes,

> It's not just having someone to commiserate with me but it's like, I'm lacking an outlet. Having those feelings pent up like that aren't good and I think having someone that you know, has the same feelings and can just be there to listen and talk helps at least in the, you know, so I don't have to go back to my car and then sit alone with it for three and a half hours just stewing.

Tim alludes here to the isolation he would experience with his disruptive emotions if he followed the norms and returned to his car alone for several hours. Instead, Tim recognizes a need for emotional support. Similarly, others describe needing "like a peer group who supports you – like peer support but your real peers" (Lex). For others, as they describe their need for emotional support, you can see their need for relational emotional processing, as seen in Study 1:

> You can't just keep 'em [feelings] in because like I said, it just eats at you. Or you become too much of a robot or whatever. It's not normal. You need to, to have those people who you can talk to about whatever you're going through. Whatever shit is eating you. And you know they'll have your back. They'll support you and not second guess you and just support you the best way they can. [Erik]

As Erik describes the importance of not being second guessed, he is seeking the affirmation that what he is feeling is normal; this affirmation is a crucial step in relational emotional processing.

In additional to needing emotional support, officers reported a related but distinct need to express themselves as more than a police officer – to shed the constricting norms of how to present oneself and behave at work. As Kyle explains,

> You're on the job and you're in uniform, we're always expected to hold a certain standard and you know to do that all the time, kind of turns you into a robot. You just want to kind of try to always kind of come back to being normal. Being a person. What it is is you got to kind of balance your life out, get back in touch with reality of who you are. And you know, being with your peer group, you know, that's where you can be you for a few minutes a day.

The isolation – emotionally and physically – in combination with the expected emotional armor of a police officer is constricting for many of these officers. In response, they express a need for authentic self-expression with certain others, as Kyle says is possible with his peer group. Relatedly, one particular officer faced a devastating personal loss that had professional ramifications. Following this event, Harry describes an awakening of his need to be seen as a human, with all that it means to be human:

> After that loss, I was having my deepest human experience and nobody wanted to allow me to do that. At work, no. They didn't want to me show that. But because I went through that, I understand better that everybody's human and everything that comes with it. I need more now that I get that, I get that so deep in my bones now. I just… needed to show who I am, somehow. I needed to find a way to do that.

Trapped in an organization that lacked a holding environment, Harry explained how his devastating loss reshaped his understanding of his own needs relating to authentic self-expression. I will explore Harry's loss further in the ***Experiencing a PSOC at Work*** section of the findings to underscore the criticality and fragility of experiencing and sustaining a PSOC at work.

Beyond their needs for emotional support and expression of self, officers described two needs that relate to their physical experience of work – physical connection and physical safety. These two needs are linked in that they both require physical presence of another, one to feel physically supported in the event of a dangerous event, and one to feel physically connected in moments of downtime. While many officers reported very few opportunities for connecting with colleagues during their day, officers described wanting physical connection in the brief moments of downtime. As Ricky said, "it's fucking boring being alone for 8 hours. And I like people, I'm a fucking outgoing guy. Is it too much to ask to talk to someone? Shoot the shit, bitch, whatever the fuck we wanna talk about. Real simple". Beyond simple chit chat, this need for physical connection is inextricably linked to their other unmet needs of emotional support and expression of self in a line of work that can be experienced as "dehumanizing":

> This [job] is dehumanizing in so many ways. Part of it's liberal media making us out as the bad guys. I get it. But the rest is just the job itself. I sit in my car alone all day every day. Maybe I'll see a guy at a call but then it's on to the next. There's no real time built into the day for socializing with people. My wife works at [redacted company name] and it seems like all she does all day is talk to people…I talk to the public sometimes but that's different. They don't want to talk to me – they don't like me – they don't see me. They just see the uniform. [Nate]

Relatedly, officers reported a need for physical safety. Despite the glorification of self-sufficiency embedded in the absence of organizational holding, many of my informants reported a desire for physical backup from their peers, stating "I just wanna know they'll be there, they'll back me up" (Gray), and "you need people to have your back and get into it with you" (Nate). This is especially problematic for officers in rural or small departments that lack the guarantee of backup:

> I'm by myself [on this shift]. I don't think I can do it anymore. I've been thinking, thinking pretty seriously really about making a change for myself because I can't take the feeling that I'm expected to take fire, draw my weapon or who the hell knows what else, and all on my own? That's not flying for me anymore. There was a time where I was like [sits tall, pounds fist into chest] proud to do this all on my own. No More. Not anymore. [Tyler]

Tyler, an officer who has worked nearly a decade as the sole officer (per shift) in their township, described becoming disillusioned with this notion of safety through self-sufficiency, and instead express their need for others. Others in larger departments became similarly disillusioned with the over-reliance on self-sufficiency.

Issues with conforming to self-sufficiency. Finally, the third realization that prompts an acknowledgement of the façade of self-sufficiency arises as individuals confront the issues with conforming to self-sufficiency. As Nate states, "I don't care what anybody says. You just can't do this job on your own. Maybe back in the days of Supercop Simone but now especially with the way of law enforcement and George Floyd, it's not safe. Not anymore". Several of my informants mentioned Supercop Simone, referring to retired police officer James Simone (Sberna, 2016). Following Simone's long career on patrol, he became (in)famous for his involvement in several high-profile incidents, including the shooting of eleven people he shot in the line of duty (killing five), all of which were evaluated as justifiable (Sberna, 2016). Simone is often heralded as Supercop, a nod to Superman, a crime fighting hero who acts alone and is (nearly) invincible. Recognizing this Supercop ideal as dangerous, officers acknowledged the fallacy of self-sufficiency in police work. As Mattie describes,

> The thing like in law enforcement, you know, the majority of people have like that kind of alpha mentality, you know that type a personality, um, but you know, asking questions you know, like and that's the thing if you don't ask questions [in] this job you're not going to be successful. And showing that you know what, hey I need your help, just as much as you need mine. So being open to that that really creates breaks down that need to be that alpha on your own. Really have that team mindset, you know that you can't do this without other people.

The recognition of the fallacy of self-sufficiency was especially salient for officers who had a partner earlier in their career, but then switched to patrol in a one-person car, usually due to staffing shortages. As Van stated,

> It'd be different if I had a partner still. That was different. But now I have to do all the same stuff but on my own. It just doesn't feel right. I always had someone checking me – did I handle that right? Was I interpreting the law the same way? I honestly don't know how anybody does this job alone. Doesn't feel safe for me, doesn't feel safe for other anybody…We used to keep each other honest, always learning always improving. It just doesn't seem right this way.

Van highlights the importance of others for their sense of safety in this work. For these officers (73% of my sample), their self-awareness regarding the various pitfalls of safety through self-sufficiency led them to acknowledge that safety through self-sufficiency was merely a façade.

This acknowledgement triggered a break from Process A and the start of Process B depicted in the bottom of Figure 3.2.

Process B: Creating and sustaining a PSOC

An alternative to Process A emerged in my data. This alternative (Process B) is an adaptive response where members work to overcome the constricting emotional norms in their organization. Process B begins as certain members (73% of sample) acknowledge the façade of self-sufficiency which I define as members becoming aware that conforming to the norms of the organization does not actually provide a sense of psychological safety; any (if at all) continued parallel actions that conform to organizational norms are simply a façade to avoid stigma and retribution.

Process B of Figure 3.2 depicts the process by individuals take action to better meet their needs by seeking others and engaging in trust assessment of others to create a PSOC with a subset of the organization. Similar to Process A, I will first demonstrate how this process unfolds with an example of my informant Nate. Nate is a patrol officer for a medium-sized suburban police department. After following Process A and conforming to the norms of self-sufficiency for the first part of his career, Nate *acknowledged the façade of self-sufficiency*, "you get to the point where it's like, okay, I need help here". Doing so triggers the start of Process B, creating and sustaining a PSOC. To do so, Nate first had to overcome the norms of isolation in the department and *create interaction opportunities* with others. Whether at a call, out for coffee, or a meal, Nate uses these interaction opportunities to judge whether his colleagues can be deemed trustworthy (according to the criteria detailed in the *Individual Trust Assessment* section below). For Nate, he was able to find others whom he trusted and who trusted him in return. Nate's efforts then shift toward sharing experiences only with those he trusts (*Sharing experiences with* *community of trusted others*). Over time, and over many interactions in which these individuals continue to prove their trustworthiness, a PSOC begins to emerge. This PSOC emerges as Nate and his trusted community routinely interact in ways that establish boundaries between insiders and outsiders, with Nate feeling a sense of belonging as an insider (*experiencing a PSOC at work*). Relying on the trust they've built, Nate (and others in his community) will make efforts to find safe spaces for interacting. Since their department itself was not seen as safe for openly communication with one another, Nate and his community started frequenting a local deli. Over time, this deli became a meaningful place for community interaction (*community place-making*), as they together felt it was "safe enough to say 'hey this is some fucked up shit and I need you to help me through it'". In this way, when Nate and his community members were at the deli, it became a *community holding space*. I will proceed through each step of Process B in Figure 3.2 in the sections below.

Creating Interaction Opportunities

Once individuals acknowledge the façade of self-sufficiency in their work, Process B in Figure 3.2 shows how individuals create a PSOC by taking action to share experiences with others, experiences which provide the basis to assess others' trustworthiness. A PSOC is later created amongst those deemed trustworthy. For the sake of clarity, this process of creating a PSOC is illustrated in Figure 3.2 in a linear fashion. However, when asked how individuals discerned certain people as safe and others as unsafe, informants described it in a much more abstract way. Clay told me he and those whom he trusted "naturally gravitated toward each other". Gray described it as "normal kind of meshing of all things". Yet, when pressed for details, my informants explained key thresholds that individuals needed to pass in order to be deemed part of their community, as described in the ***Individual Trust Assessments*** section below.

Acknowledge need for others to feel safe. Once individuals have acknowledged that they alone are unable to meet their needs for psychological safety in life-and-death work, individuals report seeking others at work to help meet these needs:

> You get to the point where it's like, okay, I need help here. I need to find people to go through this shit with – day in and day out...but people don't walk up to you and say 'hi my name is Bob, this place sucks, let's overthrow the whole damn thing. I wish they would but you have to figure out for yourself who the likeminded folk are – who really has your back. (Nate)

This is not a simple process, as Nate points out, given the norms that perpetuate widespread distrust amongst organizational members. In this way, not just anyone in the organization will be willing and able to help meet the needs of others. Therefore, officers have to discern for themselves who else in their department can help fulfill their unmet needs. As Ricky describes, "you get to learn pretty quickly who you can and can't go to. I learned almost day one who the definite 'Nos' were." When pressed for how individuals come to know who they can go to versus the "definite Nos", they explained that it is something you learn over time through shared experiences with other officers.

This awareness of whom you can and cannot approach for support represents the first active shift from Process A into Process B as individuals begin actively seeking others who can meet their needs. As Nate described in his quote above, these individuals are working past an assumption that no one can be trusted. To determine who may be trusted, individuals actively seek out shared experiences with others which form the basis for later trust assessments.

Spending time with others at work. To determine who individuals can trust to be a part of their community at work, informants recalled drawing on shared experiences to assess others on certain criteria that I will describe in the Individual Trust Assessment section below. While individuals can draw on reputational information to a limited degree, informants reported seeking out opportunities to connect with others at work in order to assess for themselves who might be trustworthy or not. As Paul described,

> You start putting yourself out there, testing the waters. Like you pull a guy aside and you tell him something and then you wait. See what happens. If you hear about it later, well you know you don't wanna be spending any more time with him. Or you watch him on a call and see is this guy an asshole or human? You find yourself doing silly stuff like this. Like inside detective work. If a guy seems like, 'all right, maybe I can see you more' then you do just that. You see him more. You make more time for him and you keep learning.

Paul is actively collecting knowledge about individual's character and competence for later trust assessment, the key influence on establishing a PSOC. Seeking time together is a major departure from the norms of physical isolation in this work, so at this stage, before a PSOC is established, much of this information comes from naturally occurring moments of interaction in this line of work:

> At that point I didn't really know those guys like I do now, so I'd make sure I joined them on as many calls as I could, you know? Like if I knew they were on a B&E [breaking and entering] alarm, I'd roll up to that area as if I'm back up... That way it's more expected to chat after and get to know what they're like. [Mike]

Similarly, others reported seeking out the same sectors as others as doing so would put them in closer proximity to begin making the necessary trust assessments described below.

Individual Trust Assessments

Influenced by these shared experiences, individuals make trust assessments that were based on the following criteria that I will define here and demonstrate how they emerged in the data in the sections that follow: *availability* (whether an individual has demonstrated themselves as trusted to be available to meet your needs), *mortality salience* (whether an individual is perceived to respond to life-and-death situations in a manner deemed appropriate by my informant), and *mindset* – (whether an individual is perceived as having a similar mindset regarding what it means to be a police officer and how to accomplish the job). Given that the unfulfilled needs of these officers span both emotional and physical safety - overcoming physical isolation and the notion of sharing emotions as a weakness – each of these criteria are evaluated on both an emotional and a physical/task-related dimension.

*Availability***.** As my informants described those with whom they feel a special bond at work, a key characteristic of those who are in their group versus those who are not, is one's availability. For an officer to deem someone else as a trusted person in their group, the officer must have had shared experiences with this other person that demonstrate that they are physically and emotionally available, as these are particularly relevant for determining one's receptiveness and availability for holding. As Erik explains, **"**it doesn't matter about personalities exactly; it's someone's always going to be there to back you up". In this case, Erik is referring to someone physically supporting you on a call at work but also supporting you emotionally through difficult times. To more clearly demonstrate the distinction between the two, you can see in this next quote from Tim the importance of being physically available at work:

> You can tell a lot about a person based on what kind of energy they're willing to put into a call. There's a particular guy that works day shift and he's known for dodging his calls. He pretends his radio wasn't on or pretends he's busy and like, I remember going to a call for a suicidal person, you know, making suicidal statements and I'm running over there because no one else called off at the scene yet and I have to go all the way across town and I see this guy, 2 minutes from the scene, and he's just sitting in a parking lot. It was his call, I was supposed to be the backup and once he saw I was there he didn't even join me. He just took himself off the call. You can bet this guy and me – yeah he's not one of the people I can rely on for anything. After that and other things, nope.

After observing this other officer disregard a dangerous situation and withhold the necessary back up the scene required, Tim assessed this person as unavailable for meeting his needs for physical safety. Relatedly, officers observed others being emotionally unavailable to help others through challenges. In one example, Ricky was in his first year on the job and had his first call about a struck deer in the road. For him, it was difficult to deal with the dead deer. He called over the radio to ask for help. When the Sergeant responded, he could hear some of the senior officers on shift mocking him in the background. He described,

> There's just some guys, some of the old-timers or people who've just been here a long time and been on patrol since the days where it really was just all macho bravado and like all the worst things people think about police. If I tried to talk to them about something they'd just be like 'why the fuck are you talking to me? What the fuck is your problem' and they'd walk away. They can't meet you where you are because they're so stuck in their ways. So, this day after what happened with the deer and I heard them shouting 'man up and call animal control you little bitch', I knew I couldn't talk about this. Not with those guys.

Thus, shared experiences with other police officers inform whether one can be trusted to be physically and emotionally available in times of need.

Mortality Salience. The life-and-death nature of police work is likely to increase the salience of one's mortality – the recognition and realization of one's own mortality (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986), as well as the salience of the mortality of others. However, it became clear in my interviews that how people approach this notion of mortality, both physically and emotionally, influences perceptions of trustworthiness and safety. Physically, many officers reported that they needed to know that a person was unlikely to increase the danger in a particular situation:

> Some guys are reckless. They take their life for granted on the streets. Maybe it's because they think they're invincible. Maybe it's, they don't care if they die. I care. I have a family. A little hellion at home. This is just my job. Don't fuck up my life because you're an asshole cop, all right? You don't want to get mixed up feeling responsible for guys like that. Don't get me wrong, if I have to draw on a guy who deserves it, you're fucking right I will. But I don't want anyone else making that decision for me because they've got something to prove. [Billie]

As Billie explains, the care a fellow officer takes in reading the situation and responding accordingly rather than engaging in excessive force, thereby making a dangerous situation even more dangerous, helps officers discern safe others. Similarly, Jim stated that “I don’t want a cowardly partner who when things kick off can’t do anything. I don’t want a guy who thinks that this position gives him some sort of power and authority and goes and makes problems for nothing”. These quotes demonstrate the importance of acknowledging one’s own mortality and the mortality of others in this work, which directly influences one’s sense of safety with others.

Relatedly, officers reported observing how fellow officers reacted to life-and-death events and making evaluations based on these reactions. As Alex describes below, incongruent emotional responses may result in distrust:

> There was this incident where he [the other person on scene], he didn’t come right out and say ‘what’s wrong with you, you should feel this way about it’. But I remember having a conversation with him and he said to me, he goes, ‘it really doesn’t bother you?’ and I go, ‘no it didn’t bother me. I don’t know why it didn’t bother me but it didn’t bother me’. Like I didn’t lose sleep over it but for him, like it bothered him at like a molecular level. He kept his distance from me after that, which like, I don’t get. [Alex]

In this incident, two young children were home when their father brutally murdered their mother. When Alex and the other officer arrived on scene, the two children were standing in the murder scene, their socks soaked with blood and one of the children said to Alex, “Daddy shot my socks”. Because Alex was unaffected by this tragic event, or at least affected differently than his fellow officer, the fellow officer created distance between himself and Alex. They were unable to process the event together and develop a bond because of his incongruence in emotional response. Instead, Sol provides insight regarding the power of having other people who react similarly to tragic events:

> You need people who are gonna let you feel whatever you’re feeling and you know that even though they weren’t there with you, they’ve seen something similar and felt something like what you’re feeling. They know it screws with you to see a dead kid. They give you the space to feel that and not feel less than. You’re like the same in that, they get it. [Sol]

Taken together, how a person acts in the face of life-and-death situations and how they react following these situations influence whether or not a fellow officer can be seen as safe.

Mindset. While it is clear that how one handles life-and-death situations could influence whether or not they are seen as trustworthy to help meet the physical and emotional needs of others, I also observed that one's general approach to the job mattered in the discernment of safe others. As I asked informants to describe those in their identified group of safe/trusted others, the often drew on policework prototypes to define their group versus others. These were described in a few different ways. Mattie describes "there's lots of different ways to do this job. You can go out looking for trouble, you can squash trouble, or you can ignore trouble. I mean that's maybe an overly simple view but [that is] what you'll see". Similarly, Jarrod described that "you've got the proactive types and the, well, I don't want to say lazy but yeah basically that's what I mean. I try to stay away from those guys because that vibe just isn't me". In this way, mindset is more about the day-to-day approach to the job rather than the life-and-death aspects of the job. This can be especially problematic for officers who are new to a department, and as such, new to the way of approaching the job at that department. Alex described a person who was hired at his department from another department, and this new person was unable to find any group to belong to, despite attempts to:

> We've taken lateral [hires] from other agencies and they'll come here and it's just an inevitable conflict because they want to do things the way they did at their old agency. And they don't fit it with anyone because of that so they either just ride it out alone or they leave. Some don't even try to learn how we do things. They don't ask questions. They do do do in their own way and that doesn't really bring on your side. [Alex]

In this example, Alex is showing how a closed mindset can keep an individual from becoming welcomed into a group. Much of this is about the actual approach to doing the job: interpreting the law, being open to learning, communicating with the public, and being proactive or reactive.

In Alex's example, the person who could not find a community had a fixed, closed mindset that suggested they were not open to learning new things. For many of my informants, this extended beyond the workday into how much your identity as a police officer extends into your nonwork life:

> We have some guys - I'm not talking about my guys here I'm talking about some of the others. They come in here and they've got something to prove. They live and breathe the thin blue line, their blood runs blue or whatever. I'm here to be a good cop, don't get me wrong, but it's, it's just my job. These other guys, they are cops but me, putting on a uniform is just my day job. I'm a whole other person outside of here. It's why I don't really hang with these people outside of work. But those guys – bar together every night or like most nights, gun range on the weekends, wives are probably reading books about being police wives. It's not like that for us. [Carlos]

For Carlos, he felt that he and the others in his group had a similar mindset regarding what it means to be a cop. This rang true for other officers as well, including those who did spend time with their peer group outside of work:

> We have fairly similar interests in our lives outside of work too which helps. It's sort of like he gets that I have a family and what that means for how I do my job. He has kids. Our kids both play hockey so it sort of helps that he has the same like, life approach you know? Being a cop is our job but we're not those guys who take family pictures in our uniforms. It pays the bills. [Evan]

Thus, a fellow officer's mindset and approach to the job – not only the life-and-death aspects of it but the deeper meaning of the job and how one puts that into action – are important in discerning trusted others.

Failure to build trust. Not everyone who sought community was able to create and become embedded within a community of trusted others. An inability to build trust triggered individuals to depart from the process of creating a PSOC (Process B) and return to conforming to norms of self-sufficiency (Process A).

For those individuals who are unable to establish the trust needed to for a PSOC to emerge, this can happen in one of two ways. First, your own assessment of others can result in no one passing the thresholds of trust. As Gen described, “I get along with most everyone, but I wouldn’t - I wouldn’t say I have any kind of group – anybody like that at work. But my god, I’ve tried. There’s just no one here that I can trust. I’m doing all right on my own”. For Gen, it is clear they tried to find trusted others, but felt that no one could be trusted. With this, Gen found safety in self-sufficiency – “I’m doing all right on my own”.

Alternatively, individuals themselves can be deemed by others as untrustworthy. This can also interfere with the experience of a PSOC at work:

> I left [previous dept] before I ever formed, like a core group, so I just kind of did my own thing you know, pulled my own traffic stops. I tried to do my thing and I tried to fit in but I probably pushed a little too hard on that which probably didn’t help. I was just always trying to insert myself into conversations or you know, tried to be a part of something. Over-zealous, you could say…People would call me out like ‘dude, the fuck are you doing?’ [Jarrod]

At his previous department, Jarrod was unable to build a community of trusted others. Instead, he too reverted to safety in self-sufficiency.

Sharing experiences with community of trusted others. Individuals will continue creating interaction opportunities with others for the basis of trust assessments over time; trust assessments are rarely based on single interactions. Instead, individuals reported that they made these assessments over months or even years of interactions. Individuals reported that eventually, they shifted to seeking out only those whom they trusted and sharing experiences with them: “It was sort of natural I guess, the way we all came together. I had spent enough time with Lenny and Rog to know they were, you know, the good ones so we started going to [coffee shop] (Cam). These interactions with Rog and Lenny led Cam to a sense of belonging to a particular group, the first dimension of a PSOC, without which none of the other four dimensions are possible:

> I guess it felt good to finally feel like a part of something. We're all part of the department and law enforcement yadda yadda but this was really being part of something... You know it because they look for ya when you're not there. A text "hey buddy, you comin' in today – you good?" or they have your coffee order ready when you get to [coffee shop]. Simplest things when I say it but it's what changed when I started doing coffee with Rog and Lenny. I don't know, I guess we were just doing our own thing together.

As Cam, Rog, and Lenny started routinely interacting at coffee time, the boundaries around insiders versus outsiders emerge. These routine interactions are the first sign of PSOC emergence, as sharing experiences with trusted others in these ways cultivated a sense of membership and belonging.

Experiencing a PSOC at Work

As individuals continue to interact with their community of trusted others, over time, they report experiencing all five dimensions of a PSOC. When I asked officers to describe these individuals with whom they trust and feel are part of their community, they used words like family, my people, my gang, a tight group, the guys, my team (even though it was not a formal team), and others had specific names for their groups like "the riverfront boys", "the parking lot gang", and "the Pleasant Dunks" – a nod to their go-to spot for socializing together, which I will explore in further detail in a later section. These groups represented a community of safe others. This notion of community separates this group from other types of relationships. As Jim described:

> Well you know police departments are cliquey just like any other organization. But I have my four people and I trust them with my life. I'd do anything for them. I'm not sure I'd say we're always friends, like we don't see each other outside of work. But here, they're my people. My work family. I spend more time with them than I do my actual family…they help me feel like I'm not doing this whole thing on my own all the time. [Jim]

Many officers shared this distinction between this group being their friends or being something else that is in some ways, even more meaningful for them. This was not true for every informant, as some did describe those in their trusted group as friends, but for the majority, this group represents something different from mere friendships. As I probed to understand the nature of the ties in these groups, I came to understand it as community as officers described experiencing a sense of community with these fellow officers:

> We don't always get along or see eye to eye but I respect them enough to tell them when I think they messed up and they can hear that and not get defensive. We can laugh – we love to laugh…but then we also talk about the serious stuff. The death, the fear… And we look out for each other on and off the streets. You don't have that with everybody, you can't. Not everyone is your family. It seems like a family, like a group of people who just belong together and take care of each other and yeah I mean I think it's good for us, you know? [Max]

This quote shows the notion of how an individual experiences membership, needs fulfillment, emotional connection, and responsibility – all key aspects of a psychological sense of community (see Table 3.5 for data on all dimensions of a PSOC). This PSOC is based on my informant's perception of a community-level connectedness with others. What separates the insiders from the outsiders is the trust built through those shared experiences that allow individuals to assess a fellow officer's availability, reaction to mortality salience, and mindset. Those who pass these thresholds are deemed to have trusted character and trusted competence. As Gray describes,

> It comes down to actions. It's about earned trust. It's not words, you can say all you want. But until I see it. And there's plenty of opportunities to see it and if there's not enough opportunities to see it that means you're not being active, that means I probably can't trust you because you're not being active enough. Like those people who skirt calls and we never saw 'em, had no idea what he did on his shifts. I didn't trust that person. I avoided them… Or those people who can't admit to the stuff we talked about – the hard stuff. The soft stuff. I have nothing to talk about with them. [Gray]

The collection of shared experiences with fellow officers allowed my informants to determine whether someone can be deemed safe – physically and emotionally. Similarly, Mattie shared that,

> Now this group of people I have, we're like a big dysfunctional family. We're very close. You have to build a trust with these other people, and it's going to take time, and you gotta share experiences with them – good and bad. And time is gonna build that bond once you know they're steady and you can trust them and they can trust you, and you're not gonna be scared to hit a door in or whatever but you're also not gonna be scared to say after the fact like' what in the actual fuck just happened' and be a human being. It's just this confidence you have that no matter what you face, you're gonna get through it together. It's confidence. It's respect. It's a competence. So now I've got this solid core group of guys that I can call anytime and you know just bullshit for hours or talk serious.

For Mattie, this group is described as meeting several physical and emotional needs. What is interesting to note is that as I asked about cliques and groups at work, these cliques were much more prominent in the organizations where organizational holding was lacking, demonstrating a distinctive need for these communities of safe others in the absence of organizational-level holding.

[INSERT TABLE 3.5 HERE]

PSOC Loss/Betrayal. Experiencing a PSOC at one point in time does not guarantee its permanence. Some of my informants felt they had a community of safe others, only to be betrayed by those whom they trusted when they needed it most. As a qualitative interviewer who has talked with hundreds of people dealing with difficult life experiences, the interviews with officers who felt betrayed by their community were the most painful interviews I have ever conducted. The anguish and misery were palpable and made it a challenge for me to complete these interviews as an objective and unbiased collector of data.

To demonstrate the experience of community betrayal in this setting, I return to the story of Harry. As I alluded to previously, Harry experienced a personal tragedy. A member of Harry's family died in a very tragic manner. Harry expected his community of trusted others to support him in his time of grief and to show up in uniform at the funeral, as they would for anyone else in the department (even those not in their trusted group). On the day of the funeral, Harry looked out into the crowd and was devastated – not only by the death of his beloved family member – but to see not a single fellow officer in the crowd. Not a single member of his community was there for him. In the days that followed, this devastation was intensified as Harry learned that all of “his guys” attended the funeral of a fallen officer just two days after the funeral of his family member. Not a single person who attended the fallen officer’s funeral knew the officer personally. Harry’s reaction is as follows:

> When I didn’t see a single uniform. Not one, wow. Knowing that every single one of our guys, when their mom or dad or someone close to them dies, we show up in our Class A uniforms. I just didn’t know how to process that. I always had this ‘thin blue line, we’re all brothers’ kind of attitude and in that moment it all came crashing down and I realized it was all just a show. It’s bullshit this ‘we’re a brotherhood’ when they go stand in front of a casket for a fallen officer that they didn’t know when their actual brother who’s standing right next to you every day is hurting and you don’t go because the cameras aren’t there. I hadn’t done anything to push anyone away. I was one of the guys. It’s – as if losing [family member] wasn’t enough. I lost them all at once. Every single person I ever trusted. Gone in an instant. Dead to me.

Hearing Harry share this difficult time demonstrates the importance of community in this context. Harry worked in an organizational that lacked a holding environment, but he himself had shifted to Process B depicted in Figure 3.2 and believed he had established a community with trusted others. Believing himself surrounded by trusted others, Harry allowed himself to embrace the vulnerability of being exposed – the first essential part of feeling safe while embracing one’s humanity (rather than safe through self-sufficiency and invulnerability). Yet, as Harry learned, he was not held by his community members in his time of need. With his community members failing to hold him, Harry was not safe within a community holding space; Harry was completely exposed and in pain. This left Harry searching for how to heal:

> I can’t just leave [the job]. There’s nothing else I can do and make this amount of money and the health benefits…I found some guy at a psychology clinic, or maybe he’s a psychiatrist. Whatever. He evaluated me and diagnosed me with PTSD and some other

> stuff and he talks to me and it's helped me get through things…but I still keep everyone here at arms-length now. That might not ever change. He's trying to teach me some tools to become more, I don't know, trusting maybe. But for now, arm's length.

Harry knew that a full return to safety in self-sufficiency was not enough, given the degree of his pain. He had already acknowledged the façade of this type of safety. Instead, he followed two parallel paths – a return to avoiding emotional processing with others at work while seeking therapy externally. Others who experienced a similar loss of trust also expressed that exiting the profession was not necessarily an option given financial constraints. One informant alluded to a slightly different exit to the profession as an option:

> You get to that point where everything is lost. You can't trust anyone. The people who you spent every holiday with them. You let them into every part of your life. You threw down together and you grew up together. When they pull the rug out from under you for – for what? A promotion? You start thinking to yourself how can I leave this hellhole and still pay my bills? Put my kids through college… It's no wonder so many cops commit suicide. [Mario]

Experiencing community betrayal in this context, layered on top of the exposure to tragic and traumatic events, leaves individuals unarmored and entirely vulnerable to both physical and emotional harm, given their previous move toward acknowledging a need for others. As these stories from Harry and Mario show, a sense of community in the absence of organizational holding is both critical and fragile.

Community Place-Making

As PSOC literature describes, the maintenance of a community relies on the ability of its members to interact (Allan & Allan, 1971; Festinger, 1950). Thus, communities will seek out spaces within which to interact with their community members. In the context of this study, communities must make the effort to find spaces that are safe for community interaction because the organization – the physical space within the department itself – is not deemed safe. However, how *spaces* – isolated physical locations – become imbued as being safe *places,* requires the practice of place-making, which “transforms…that place, in either its material (physically constructed) or narrated (socially constructed) form” (Cartel et al., 2022: 356). In the case of this dissertation, that involves how community-place making transforms a space into a safe place.

Before showing how spaces become meaningful places in this context, I will illustrate how physical space is enacted differently across different physical spaces: the physical structure of the organization itself (i.e., police station) and a community “meet up” spot:

> After that [the event], there was this big department meeting at the station where everyone got together. The Captain stood up there and said “there’s no rank here – blah blah” and “make sure you rely on peer support or one of the department counselors whatever. But the Captain and your Commander are there but you know this is complete administrative bullshit. You can’t say anything, rank is still there. Well, I kept my mouth shut. ‘I’m good, I’m good’ and everybody else pretty much did the same. Because we’re in a department facility. Rank is definitely not gone. But later with Smith and Rodriguez when we’re doing our meet up Smith says, ‘Gray – were you afraid? When you entered that building knowing the murder suspect was still inside, were you afraid?’ and I’m like ‘well hells yeah, of course I was afraid, weren’t you guys?’ and they were like ‘I’m so relieved to hear you say that’. (Gray)

At their meet-up, which took place routinely at a particular intersection in town, Gray and his community members were able to bypass the constricting norms of the organization and admit to fear. In doing so, members engaged in the relational emotional processing observed in Study 1.

The spaces communities chose to meet – e.g., cruiser cuddles, coffee shops, parking lots –took on special meaning for community members. I observed community members engage in ***community place-making***, where members enact a particular place physically and socially, which develops a socialized meaning of a place. Specifically, informants identified four key aspects that make a place “safe” for interacting, and then, by interacting in these spaces, the space becomes a meaningful place (see Figure 3.1, theoretical categories). In this way, the bounded spaces in which individuals interact (e.g., a particular parking lot) are given meaning as community places. In this way, the more a particular space is enacted, the greater meaning the community imbues on this space as an important place for the community.

As my informants reflected on the important places where their community interacts, it became clear that for any space to be a place for interaction it must be deemed safe according to the following four criteria that I will define here and develop further below: they are spaces where police *presence is invited and non-threatening (*spaces in which officers feel welcome and the public does not feel threatened), spaces that allow *stealthy presence* (spaces where individuals can be veiled or hidden and their conversations cannot be overheard) and *present minimal disruption* (spaces that limit potential disruptions from outsiders during community interactions), and spaces that enable officers to *maintain vigilance* (space allows for maintained vigilance if officers can swiftly respond to developing situations from that space). When a space meets these criteria, it allows for key organizational norms to be paused, and thus, encourages community interaction in ways that run counter to the organizational norms to meet the unfulfilled needs of community members. The more the community interacts in a particular place, the more likely that space is to become a meaningful place to meet community needs.

Since my interviews were with individuals rather than with communities, I base this community place-making process on informants' perceptions and descriptions of how their community identified/created certain spaces as meaningful places for their community.

Presence Invited. Police officers carry around that work identity with them in a very visible way: their uniform, their duty belt with gun, and their cruiser. Unless working under cover, on-duty officers are not able to hide their profession. Therefore, for a space to be safe for community interaction, the space itself must be seen as welcoming to police officers, where officers feel their presence is invited, or at least their presence is not threatening or discouraged. As Mattie explained:

> We, like the same restaurant during the day when we work we did the same restaurant, because it's - it's place that we're familiar with, we trust the people there they're probably okay with law enforcement, for the most part. It'd be very irregular that we went somewhere, you know different…and it's [this restaurant] never packed, we're able to sit by ourselves, you know the people who work there, we know them and they're cool with us, you know we don't have to worry about, you know, spitting in our food or you know stuff like that. [Mattie]

Mattie and his group go to the same restaurant for lunch daily and as he describes, this is because they perceive that the restaurant staff is welcoming to police and thus, won't mistreat Mattie and his group. In this way, the space is non-threatening to the group. Others reported that the places they choose to go are places where they themselves will not be perceived as threatening. As Chase said, "we don't go to places where our uniform is likely to stir up trouble. We're not looking to start anything". Others shared similar stories of specifically choosing areas to avoid where they know that a police presence could be cause for alarm or suspicious. As Dylan shared,

> We used to sit in this fuel lot. It doesn't see much traffic, it's out of the way. But then we had a pretty serious situation there a few weeks back and I had to cuff a guy and bring him in. Turns out he [the arrested individual] was tight with the manager there and now things have changed. We've been hitting that spot for years but after taking him in, everyone thinks we're up to something.

For Dylan and his group, this gas station is no longer a safe space because their presence is now threatening and thus, no longer invited.

Stealthy Presence. In addition to feeling welcome in a space, officers reported an importance to feeling stealthy in the space. By stealthy, officers described various degrees of feeling hidden, unseen, or unheard. For Alex, this is about not being heard by outsiders:

> To be pretty closed, I mean like out of the public eye. Okay, you know what I mean like, not closed off like 'oh it's only me and my group', you know, but like closed off, meaning that nobody can hear what we said and no one on the outside can say 'I can't believe what they just said', you know what I mean… 100% truth is we have so many

> areas in the station that are recorded and there's a microphone in an interview room that can pick up everything that's in the squad room so everyone knows that, so no one talks in the station at all.

As Alex described the safe areas to me, he described them in comparison to the station which "has ears everywhere" and thus, isn't safe for communicating with community members. For other officers, visibility was also important to maintaining a stealthy presence during community interactions:

> We'd usually grab out coffee and then go to the park. It was kind of like, safer than staying at the coffee shop because it was off the radar. Otherwise having four sector cars parked in front of the coffee shop and then like, the captain drives by and we're in trouble. So as silly as it sounds like, we would like, we would go and hide. Like, go to the park and make sure we were in a spot that you couldn't see from the street, you know and we'd drink our coffee there. [Zack]

For Zack and his group, being fully hidden in this park provided the necessary sense of safety. Not only were they hidden from the public view, but Zack and his group were also hidden from the Captain, a department enforcer of the norms of physical isolation. While it is understandable that the Captain may prefer that the officers be out on patrol rather than socializing in a park over coffee, it is important to note that this enforcement of physical isolation was not present in the interviews with individuals who experienced organizational holding.

Limited Disruption. When officers interact with their community members in these spaces they deem safe, it is important to keep in mind what they are looking to accomplish. They are aiming to meet their unfulfilled needs that are created by norms of physical isolation and the perception that sharing emotions is a sign of weakness. Within these spaces, officers are looking to have difficult and emotional conversations, and they see being interrupted as a huge deterrent to doing so. As Pat explained, "we just want to go to the parking lot and hang out and talk about everything without being bothered". Similarly, Jim describes "you pick the places where you can be you for like 10 minutes without somebody else bothering you for something on your so-called downtime”. This is especially true when the content of the conversation is sensitive:

> I know a few that are more private and where we might not have another officer happen to turn around in there to interrupt the conversation that we use when we need it. I think it'd be awkward to have another person pull in and be like ‘hey what's up guys’ and then you're like ‘hey we're just kind of having a serious conversation, can you go away?’ because then that person will go to you later and be like ‘hey what was that about like what's all that?’ and then what are you supposed to say? Better to not have anyone even know. [Cam]

For Cam, interruptions from another officer are especially threatening because not only does it interrupt the flow of the conversation, but it also draws attention to the conversation itself. If outsiders are not aware of the conversations, there is no risk of them testing the trust you have established with your group by asking for details.

Maintain Vigilance. While officers reported some off-duty safe spaces where they would interact with their community, I focus exclusively on those that occur during shift where officers still have duties to perform. For officers, the fact that they are still on-duty influences which spaces are safe, as Mattie said, “our downtime is still working in a sense. There’s no real off when you’re on”. With this in mind, safe spaces are those that allowed officers to quickly respond to developing situations:

> Especially when it gets slower in the middle of the night we'll be sitting car to car and we’ll be talking and it's just easier that way if we decide that we're going to go get into something or we get a hot call we can move quickly. [Jarrod]

For Jarrod, sitting car-to-car (what GPD officers referred to as cruiser cuddles) was a way to remain physically close to someone in his community while still maintaining the ability to quickly respond to calls.

In addition to remaining vigilant to developing calls, officers also reported needing to remain vigilant to potential harm from anyone looking to start trouble with them as police officers:

> It’s a location where, so it’s both centrally located so we’re not too far from any calls so you can you respond to a call in good time. But we weren't also in like the line of sight of, so if somebody wanted to come over, we're in a safe spot that no one can come out of nowhere and where we can't see it. So, it's safety issue. We can see everyone come in or out without anyone sneaking up. So, it was it was like our little safe zone, so no one's going to come up on us. [Pat]

This quote shows that vigilance is both about protecting yourself from physical harm while also being on the ready to respond to any situation. Similarly, other officers shared that their group has a particular table in their favorite restaurant and they refuse to sit anywhere else because “I need to be facing all the exits – I need to see everyone coming and I need to be able to get out quickly” (Rob). Thus, the ability to maintain vigilance is critical for a space to be deemed “a safe zone”.

Space becomes a meaningful place. Once certain spaces have been deemed safe according to these four criteria, community members will continue seeking out these spaces for community interaction. As Clay describes:

> We have this one Dunks that we go to over on [street name], the five or six of us. We used to go every day but anyway it’s still most days. Everyone gets their coffee or tea or sandwich or doughnut or whatever…it’s never not that Dunks. It’s ours. Nobody else [in their department] is gonna go there because they know that.

This routine enactment of this particular coffee shop transforms this space into a meaningful place (Cartel et al., 2022) for this community, as “place-making is not just about the relationships of people to their places; it also creates relations among people in places” (Schneekloth & Shibley, 1995:1). By continuing to go to this particular coffee shop, Clay and his community members reaffirm the space as safe, and as long as their interactions within it also remain safe, the physical space itself becomes a meaningful place for the community.

Many of my informants described strong attachments to their particular spaces for community interaction. While a community can have several spaces that they deem safe, some were more revered than others:

> When we park (car-to-car), there's this one spot we like to go to…I think other people use that same spot though because it's nice and tucked away so if we really need privacy like more than that, we'll go to the park and find our bench. [laughs] I bet you there's a mark near my seat where my baton scrapes it every time I sit down. (Zack)

Thus, while communities engage in place-making, certain spaces become more meaningful than others depending on the way community members enact the space itself.

Those in my sample who worked in organizations that encouraged holding also described creating safe spaces away from the department, but these were different in two ways. First, in organizations with holding environments, the station itself and all of the people in it are deemed safe. When safe spaces away from the station are sought out, it was because the officers were in the field and could not easily return to the station, rather than it being important that the space was away from the station. Second, the spaces deemed safe did not depend on who was present; any other officer from their department could be there and the space would still be "safe". Thus, they were not necessarily bound by a particular group of people and so, these spaces never became meaningful places.

Community Holding Spaces

As community members – those who one another deem trustworthy – come together in spaces that have also been deemed safe, a community holding space is created. I define community holding spaces according to its three theoretical components (seen in Figure 3.1): temporary holding places that meet community members' unfulfilled needs regarding psychological and physical safety in ways that strengthen the community's PSOC. In these holding spaces, communities create the conditions necessary to overcome the absence of organizational holding to provide a sense of holding and thus, a sense of psychological safety for community members. This psychological safety is distinct from the safety through self-sufficiency that is achieved in Process A (Figure 3.2). The sense of psychological safety felt in community holding spaces allows individuals to accept and express their humanity and all the intrinsic vulnerabilities of being human – emotional and physical – and still feel safe within the context of particular community places. This sense of psychological safety, then, is situated within certain people and places.

Fulfills unmet needs. These community holding spaces become the relationally and physically situated spaces to meet community members needs that were left unfulfilled through strict conformance to organizational norms. In a conversation with patrolman Clay about why his group chose to frequent one particular coffee shop, he described:

> In our little group, we may talk family stuff or talk about personal stuff. We try not to have like 100% of the shift be the job the job the job. You need to have a little bit of, be a little bit of human you know. And I think that's what we use that time for you know. It's just more of yeah, we're doing the job you know, and you know we might talk about a few calls or whatever but, then you just have that social group as a kind of like a peer support group to bring everybody back to normal I guess you know. You know, it's a time to debrief kind of like a refresh or like a breath of fresh air. These people help remind you, you know, we're human. Yeah so you kind of need your group to get back to reality and kind of get back to you know being normal you know…you can't do this just anywhere. Not at roll call, of course. Uh, not anywhere in the station matter of fact... It's within those few spots where me and the guys can really talk. [particular coffee shop] is our main spot for things like that.

Clay's description of his experiences in his community holding space – the particular coffee shop - provide evidence to the power of these spaces for acknowledging these officers unfulfilled needs, especially that of being a human being – of being vulnerable. This is a directly result of the experience of psychological safety within the group, where individuals perceive that it is safe to engage in interpersonal risk taking (Edmondson, 1999). As Time describes, “When I talk to them, I know it wouldn’t like, if I didn’t want it to go anywhere that it wouldn’t, you know. I wouldn’t have to worry about talking to them. And they’ve never you know, brought it up, what we’ve talk about in the past, they’ve never mentioned it to anybody”. Similarly, Jim stated that “My guys won’t throw me under the bus, you know, cuz sometimes, well we all fuck up. Not like in a big way but like, I might tell someone to go fuck himself and I can tell them [his group] about it and they can tell me how to do it better next time without throwing me under the bus.”

Strengthens PSOC. Similarly, officers reported that routine enactment of community holding spaces serves to further strengthen their community’s psychological sense of community. As Mattie describes:

> I've got a close-knit group of guys that, you know, they're absolutely my ride or dies, you know. I can be out the middle of nowhere I call them up, they're there in a heartbeat you know. We've [pauses, takes deep breath] - we've cried on each other's shoulders before. Back in August we lost one of our best friends. Heart complications. He was he was one of the boys and he passed, but I feel like in his passing, as we dealt with his passing together, it brought us a lot closer as well you know, our group. But just that in this job I don't feel like you can have you can have like a lot of acquaintances. Most people don’t have a lot of friends. So, I know I’m damn lucky to have these guys because I feel like that's - that's the biggest thing that helps you get through all this stuff.

In his relational processing of the grief that followed the loss of their community member, Mattie describes an important aspect of these holding spaces: the more these community holding spaces are used, the stronger one’s sense of community becomes. There are several officers who reported their community falling apart due to job change or even shift change (which complicates the ability to connect both in and out of work), which suggests that for holding to be available, communities must interact within these safe spaces. Otherwise, individuals are again isolated and left without a safe space for meeting their needs. This also highlights the fragility of these community holding spaces, as job changes, shift changes, retirements, and other community changes are likely to disrupt members' PSOC. Thus, while these community holding spaces help meet an individual's need for a sense of safety in the absence of organizational holding, they are fragile and susceptible to disruption and therefore not an adequate substitute for organizational norms that promote a broader ability to feel held and safe in this work.

Taken together, the findings of this study show how individuals actively create a PSOC at work. Specifically, this study shows how, in the absence of an organizational holding environment, individuals shift from conforming to organizational norms that encourage a sense of safety through self-sufficiency toward a sense of psychological safety with others. To do so, individuals share experiences with others in ways that enable individual trust assessments. Based on these trust assessments, individuals form communities with whom they experience a PSOC. Given organizational norms that encourage physical isolation, community members together work to imbue certain spaces as safe for community interaction through a process of community place-making. In doing so, a community creates community holding spaces which help fulfill individuals' unmet needs around psychological and physical safety, thus further strengthening the group's PSOC.

CHAPTER 9: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Through two inductive-qualitative studies on relational emotional processing in life-and-death work, this dissertation contributes to research, theory and practice. Before I describe these contributions, I will briefly review the collective findings of this dissertation. I will then proceed through a discussion of the theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, I contribute to three key literatures: emotional processing, psychological sense of community, and holding environments. Practically, I hope to suggest a critical method for members in life-and-death work to overcome the emotional burden of routine exposure to trauma, and detail the individual, relational, and organizational factors that shape it. While I have alluded to these contributions throughout the two studies, I will describe the contributions and implications of this dissertation in detail below. Additionally, I will describe the limitations of this study and suggest opportunities to overcome these through future research. Lastly, I will detail key suggestions for additional research and close with concluding remarks about the importance of this dissertation.

Collective Findings of Dissertation

In professions that I consider to involve life-and-death work, members are routinely exposed to situations where their life or the life of someone else is on the line (e.g., police work, soldiers in the military, medical doctors, emergency responders, firefighters). Through the natural course of performing one’s duties in this kind of work, workers are exposed to traumatic situations over the course of a career, and in response, are likely to experience certain feelings such as sadness, emotional pain, anger, and fear (Jackall, 2007; Maslach, 1982; Molinsky & Margolis, 2005; Van Maanen, 1980). Yet extensive literature has shown that the emotional norms in these life-and-death professions tend to discourage authentic emotional expression (Harris, 1978; Martin, 1999; Price, 1996; Rawski & Workman-Stark, 2018), complicating the ability to heal from these traumatic events (Abraham, 1998; Foa, 1997; Foa et al., 2006; Morris & Feldman, 1997; Rachman, 1980; Rachman, 2001). Collectively, the two studies of this dissertation explore this tension of emotionally-evocative events occurring within organizations that (implicitly or explicitly) encourage emotional suppression.

In Study 1, I explore whether and how members find ways to process their negative emotions with others, despite norms that encourage suppression. Clinical psychology and organizational literature agree that emotional processing ("a process whereby emotional disturbances are absorbed, and decline to the extent that other experiences and behaviors can proceed without disruption" [Rachman, 1980, p.51]), is a critical method for unburdening oneself from the painful emotions associated with traumatic events (Kahn, 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008; Pascual-Leone et al., 2007). Yet, neither literature provides any indication of how emotional processing might unfold at work, especially in light of norms that would seem to prevent it. Through an inductive qualitative study with one police department, I found that members engaged in what I call relational emotional processing, *an enactment whereby individuals re-engage the memory of a traumatic event with trusted others at work, cognitively reappraise the event, and socially affirm the emotional experience associated with the event.* This is a previously untheorized enactment of emotional processing that occurs informally at work. This enactment is enabled by the boundedness of these interactions: relational emotional processing occurs only with trusted others in certain physical places. In Study 2, I build on these findings to further unpack the importance of these two boundaries.

Findings from Study 1 suggested the importance of a group of trusted others with whom to engage in relational emotional processing. This group of trusted others seem to resemble a community, where members within the community experience a Psychological Sense of

Community (PSOC). A PSOC is defined as, the perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, and the feelings that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure" (Sarason, 1974: p.157). Yet, much of the literature on PSOC is ahistorical, and does not provide insight into how individuals actively create their community of trusted others. Through a qualitative study with police officers across the U.S., I explored whether and how police officers actively create and sustain a PSOC with trusted others in an organization with norms that would seem to prevent it. My findings show how this process unfolds as depicted in Process B of Figure 3.2.

Relatedly, Study 1 demonstrated that while relational emotional processing requires trusted others, it also requires physical places in which to enact it, especially when the organization promotes norms that discourage it. Organizational literature has recently taken a turn toward understanding spaces and places (Shortt, 2015), to show how places meaningfully impact organizational outcomes (Weinfurtner & Seidl, 2019). In this study, I connect this literature on physical places with literature of PSOC to show how community members together engage in place-making (Cartel et al., 2022; Schneekloth & Shibley, 1995) to make certain places safe for relational emotional processing. In doing so, the findings of Study 2 demonstrate that when trusted community members come together in physical places they have deemed safe through place-making efforts, community holding spaces are created. I define community holding spaces as temporary holding places that meet community members' unfulfilled needs regarding psychological and physical safety in ways that strengthen the community's PSOC. These findings demonstrate that holding environments are not purely relationally (Applegate,

1997) or psychologically experienced (Kahn, 2001); they are grounded in the physical places in which they exist.

Altogether, this dissertation shows how members in life-and-death work overcome constricting norms the encourage emotional suppression by actively creating a PSOC with trusted others. With a PSOC established, community members together engage in place-making to deem certain physical spaces safe to engage in relational emotional processing. As community members engage in relational emotional processing together within these safe spaces, community holding spaces are created. Engaging with one another in these community holding spaces enables members to fulfill their unmet needs for psychological safety, physical safety, and emotional healing.

Theoretical contributions to the emotional processing literature

For over a century, psychologists have acknowledged the criticality of processing traumatic events to avoid the damaging psychological and physiological consequences of unprocessed emotions (e.g., Freud, 1910). However, much of the scholarship since that time has focused on clinical therapies for encouraging emotional processing. While the term emotional processing or more simply "processing" has been casually referenced in management scholarship as a method for overcoming painful emotions following traumatic events (e.g., Kahn, 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008), it is never cited as a theoretical construct, ignoring the foundational roots and understanding of the construct and what it looks like. Instead, emotional processing in the management literature has been referenced in a general sense without being scientifically defined (Kahn, 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008) or described merely as storytelling (Garland, 2002; Kahn et al., 2013). The literature has remained silent regarding how it can be measured and understood and how organizations can create the conditions to enable emotional processing to occur.

Study 1 formally introduces emotional processing into the management literature and fosters its development as a theoretical construct with meaningful organizational outcomes. While the colloquialized understanding of emotional processing in the context of work relegates it to simple storytelling, this dissertation explicates what emotional processing can look like in one type of organization. Specifically, Study 1 introduces a specific type of emotional processing that may occur within the context of work –relational emotional processing – which occurs through informal interactions between colleagues. The findings of Study 1 provide a model for the individual, relational, and organizational factors that influence how emotional processing unfolds in organizations and details the importance of relational emotional processing in organizations where members are routinely exposed to traumatic events.

In doing so, this dissertation broadens our understanding of other relational mechanisms for healing from the emotional wounds of trauma such as compassion. Much like emotional processing with others, compassionate responding from others has been shown to help suffering individuals overcome the wounds associated with their emotional pain (Dutton, Workman, & Hardin, 2014; Frost, 2003; Lilius et al., 2008). Yet, compassion is also shown to be shaped by the emotional norms of the organization such that not all organizations will encourage compassionate responding (Barsade & O’Neill, 2014). Additionally, compassion literature has shown the efficacy of compassionate responding in isolated incidents and its shortcomings for more routine exposure to traumatic events given the risk of compassion fatigue (Adams, Boscarino, & Figley, 2006; Figley, 1999; Figley, 2002; Greinacher et al., 2019; Huggard & Unit, 2013). This study shows how community interactions in safe spaces can help community members overcome norms that would seek to inhibit the kind of emotional openness required for compassion. Thus, while organizational norms may *interfere* with compassion, it is unlikely that organizations can extinguish it entirely. Also, as relational emotional processing was accomplished at the community level, it is possible that compassion too can be accomplished beyond the dyadic pairing that literature typically portrays (Dutton, Workman, & Hardin, 2014). In a community, the burden of responding is spread across community members which may reduce the risk of compassion fatigue. Despite exposure to routine relational emotional processing interactions, not a single informant reported anything akin to a reduced capacity or interest in doing so.

As demonstrated in Study 1, relational emotional processing was a crucial mechanism for individuals to overcome counterproductive norms in their organization. In particular, the findings of Study 1 demonstrate the criticality of a previously untheorized aspect of emotional processing, that of social affirmation of experience. Much of the emotional processing literature to date that takes seriously what constitutes processing (beyond mere storytelling) exists in the context of a therapeutic relationship (Foa & Kozak, 1986; Foa & McNally, 1986; Monson et al., 2006; Rupp et al., 2017; Shapiro, 2017). In these relationships, affirmation is encapsulated in a broader understanding between patient and therapist (Farber, Suzuki & Lynch, 2019), or deemed unnecessary given the separateness of the therapeutic relationship from one's social world (Derlega, Margulis, & Winstead, 1987). Yet, for individuals who work in organizations that implicitly or explicitly discourage seeking clinical intervention in the face of negative emotional experiences, individuals who wish to process their emotions have to look within their social world for this support. Doing so raises the need for this third untheorized aspect of emotional processing, as individuals seek affirmation that their emotional experience is acknowledged, understood, and respected by their peers. This is what separates relational emotional processing apart from other forms of emotional processing – the relational enactment and affirmation with peers. While the boundedness of these interactions enables the enactment of relational emotional processing, its effectiveness lies in the social affirmation members receive from their peers as individuals no longer feel alone with their negative emotions and they come to realize that their own feelings are accepted by others. In the case of the GPD, this was even possible despite norms that perpetuated the notion that emotions are a sign of weakness. Thus, this social affirmation of emotional experience allowed members to overcome these counterproductive norms in the context of life-and-death work.

While this enactment of relational emotional processing allows individuals to become unburdened by their emotional experiences, the boundedness of these interactions shapes relational dynamics beyond the scope of these emotional processing interactions. In this way, relational emotional processing is not only shaped by the network of relationships in an organization, but it becomes a reinforcing mechanism that perpetuates and even magnifies the particular patterns of groups and cliques within an organization. As individuals search for trusted others with whom to engage in relational emotional processing interactions (as described further below), individuals create boundaries that enclose certain others within and push everyone else out. The findings from Study 1 suggest that the more these groups enact relational emotional processing within these boundaries, the more difficult it becomes to permeate these social boundaries of insiders and outsiders. Those inside the boundaries receive clear benefit through the enactment of relational emotional processing and all other social benefits to belonging to a particular group (as detailed in the PSOC section below). Yet, these same boundaries keep others out, others who may have great need for emotional processing, but instead are left as casualties simply because they are unable to permeate the boundaries of these social groups.

Theoretical contribution to the PSOC literature

This dissertation also informs the psychological sense of community literature by demonstrating the process through which a PSOC emerges and how it shapes and influences relational emotional processing opportunities at work. While a relatively new construct in the field of management, several scholars have recently established its importance in organizations (e.g., Boyd & Nowell, 2014; Livne-Tarandach & Jazaieri, 2020). This dissertation continues to foster this construct in management scholarship by elaborating a process of how a PSOC emerges in organizations, and specifically within organizations that promote norms that would seem to interfere with building such strong relational ties. In doing so, this dissertation demonstrates how organizational norms can facilitate or interfere with the emergence of a PSOC.

First, this dissertation provides empirical evidence of how individuals come to experience a PSOC with certain others; that is, how a PSOC emerges amongst a subset of people within a larger group or organization. Literature suggests that a PSOC can emerge as organizational members co-construct community across the organization (Garrett, Spreitzer & Bacevice, 2017), but this does not answer how organizational members may come to experience a PSOC with a smaller sub-set of the organization. This is consistent with PSOC scholarship more broadly that explores PSOC in much larger and more established communities (Brodsky, O'Campo & Aronson, 1999; Davids et al., 2015; Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1995; Perkins et al., 1990; Pretty & McCarthy, 1991; Proescholdbell, Roosa, & Nemeroff, 2006) that is silent on the actual emergence of PSOC. This dissertation builds on this foundational research and adds to it in two key ways. First, this dissertation demonstrates that organizational norms, structures, routines, and practices can differentially influence the possible emergence of a PSOC. As observed in Study 2, some organizations promoted a PSOC across all organizational members through norms that encouraged psychological safety amongst members and valued organizational member interaction. Alternatively, other organizations interfered with this PSOC emergence, demonstrating the critical influence of organizational structures and norms on the relational fabric of the organization. This dissertation is the first research to demonstrate this influence of the organization on the emergence and maintenance of PSOC.

Relatedly, this dissertation provides a detailed process of how a PSOC emerges in organizations. As shown in Figure 3.2, the PSOC emergence process occurs as individuals actively construct a community of certain others with whom they come to experience a PSOC. These communities are not (purely[14]) organizationally dictated; individuals enact a process to seek and assess others as possible community members. Shared experiences with colleagues serve the basis for which assessments regarding community insiders versus outsiders are made. In much of the PSOC literature, the makeup of communities is taken-for-granted, even with the PSOC literature in organizations. This dissertation provides evidence of an alternative and more agentic process for PSOC emergence in organizations that highlights the importance for assessing whether other possible members can meet the needs of the community.

This dissertation also illuminates the fragility and tenuous nature of a PSOC in organizational life. As described, PSOC literature in organizations is in its early stages. As management scholars continue to foster this construct, it is important to consider the ways organizations may differ from other contexts in which communities emerge. Specifically, organizational structures, routines, membership, and practices, are not static; they are fluid and ever-changing. Individuals themselves within organizations are dynamic. As evidenced in Study

---

[14] I acknowledge that there is some self-selection into the profession, organizational dictates around shift, and organizationally-created opportunities within which to discern others, all which influence with whom one established a PSOC.

2, this reality makes an individual's PSOC tenuous and susceptible to disturbance. Disruptions in workplace routines and staffing can make community members unavailable to one another. For individuals who come to rely on their community to meet their needs, this sudden lack of community availability can be disruptive. This PSOC disruption has not previously been addressed in the PSOC literature (for an exception, see Bathum & Baumann, 2007). This dissertation provides key evidence of how individuals experience and respond to a sudden disruption in one's PSOC.

Finally, this dissertation specifically addresses the link between a PSOC and the spaces – the bounded settings (Weinfurtner & Seidl, 2019) in which community members interact. As illustrated in Figure 3.2, this dissertation demonstrates how community members come to enact place-making in certain physical spaces (Cartel et al., 2022; Schneekloth & Shibley, 1995) to help strengthen community boundaries and create safe spaces to meet the needs of community members. While existing PSOC research acknowledges the importance of boundaries and emotional connection in creating a PSOC, research has not yet explored the relationship between community members and the physical spaces in which they interact. Specifically, this dissertation shows the mutually reinforcing relationship between a community (experiencing a PSOC) and the spaces in which the community members interact in ways that meet their needs (community place-making).

Theoretical contributions to literature on holding environments

This dissertation builds on a growing body of work in management literature that draws on the notion of holding environments. In its most literal interpretation, holding represents the mother physically holding their child, creating boundaries that hold the vulnerable child within in ways that enable them to experience themselves as valued and secure (Winnicott, 1960). In a therapeutic setting, holding "facilitates the elaboration and management of emotional experience" (Slochower, 2013: 1). Holding, thus, simultaneously welcomes and contains vulnerability. These vulnerabilities are not insignificant, as they can pose existential threats and risks. Being held in light of these vulnerabilities is critical for survival. Yet, as management scholars introduce the notion of holding into studies of organizations, what it means to be held has lost this essence of human frailty and vulnerability. By making the concept of holding more generalizable, we have sacrificed its deeper human relevance. Instead, holding simply becomes a context in which individuals can lessen disturbing affect and make sense of their situation (Petriglieri, Ashford & Wrzesniewski, 2019). In this dissertation, I enrich organizational conversations of holding environments by returning to earlier conceptualizations of holding that incorporate both the physical and emotional needs of human beings. As physical beings, humans need holding in an emotional sense to lessen disturbing affect, but also need holding as we did as infants in response to dangerous physical stimuli in our environment. This is especially crucial in life-and-death work where one's own life may be at risk.

Not all work will surface this same need for physical holding, however. This dissertation draws attention to the fact that what it means to be held and the type of holding needed are matters of situated need; an infant needing to be physically and emotionally protected by its mother as it learns and grows; a gig worker needing to cultivate a sense of work identity in the absence of attachment to a particular organization; a police officer needing to feel physical and emotional connection with others. In each scenario, the need for holding arises from the individual, relational, and organizational context. The need to be held – whether physically, emotionally, or both – is a result of an individual feeling unable to safely fulfill their needs on their own. The needs themselves vary and ultimately may extend beyond the reduction of disturbing affect (Petriglieri, Ashford & Wrzesniewski, 2019). Thus, this dissertation expands understanding of what drives a need for holding in the context of work and specifically in life-and-death work.

This work also builds on Petriglieri and colleagues' (2019) study of gig workers which was the first of its kind to show how workers cultivate holding environments in the absence of organizational holding. While Petriglieri and colleagues demonstrate that gig workers experienced holding from significant others in the absence of organizational membership, much as I observed in Study 1, Study 2 extends these findings by showing the process of how individuals identify certain others as being competent and available to provide holding. Specifically, this study shows how a PSOC creates the psychological safety between community members to allow holding. Community members are deemed both competent and reliable to provide holding through the individual trust assessment individuals enact to distinguish community insiders versus outsiders. These relationships are depicted in Process B of Figure 3.2.

Moreover, Study 2 demonstrates the actual physical spaces that enable these holding spaces. This is the first study to my knowledge that explores how individuals come to identify certain physical spaces as facilitative to holding. Thus, this dissertation moves beyond conceptual work that theorizes the facilitating conditions of holding environments (Kahn, 2001; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010) and empirical work that shows evidence of holding in the context of work (Petriglieri, Ashford & Wrzesniewski, 2019), to provide evidence regarding with whom, where, and how holding spaces are created and sustained. As seen in Process B of Figure 3.2, this dissertation shows how holding spaces require both trusted others (via a PSOC) and safe physical spaces (via community place-making) for competent, reliable, and sustained holding. Despite work in environmental psychology that demonstrates the importance of physical settings for achieving desired social and organizational behavior (e.g., Wener, 2012), previous conceptual and empirical studies of holding environments acknowledge only the relational conditions necessary for holding.

Additionally, this dissertation introduces a previously untheorized type of holding space – a community holding space – to show how communities (and a PSOC) emerge and subsequently identify spaces in which to give and receive holding. These community holding spaces are unique in several ways. First, they are not purely dyadic, team-based, or organizationally-dictated (Kahn, 2001). These community holding spaces are co-constructed by members who come together in search of community to meet certain needs in certain spaces. Thus, the holding spaces are accomplished by a community, for the community, in spaces deemed safe by the community through community place-making (Cartel et al., 2022). Second, these are not naturally occurring spaces that arise in a moment of need; there is intentional repetition and routine in the creating of these holding spaces to fulfill the ongoing needs of feeling held – of feeling safely vulnerable despite the harsh realities of life-and-death work. Thus, this dissertation connects literature on holding spaces (as purely relationally bound) to work on physical space as bounded settings (Weinfurtner & Seidl, 2019) that take on meaning through place-making (Cartel et al., 2022). In doing so, I conceptualize the importance of the physical, material world for creating holding environments. Outside of the therapeutic context, there are no studies that show how individuals create routine interaction opportunities in certain places with certain others for the purpose of creating a holding environment.

The benefits of these community holding spaces in the absence of organizational holding cannot be overstated. My informants reported feeling safe, loved, supported, and even claiming "I wouldn't be alive if not for them". Yet, these communities are only necessary as a defense against the dysfunctional norms of the organization. Contrary to Study 1, some of my informants in Study 2 reported that they worked in police agencies that encouraged open emotional discussion following difficult events. For these officers, their needs around what it means to feel safe in this work were satisfied via the organization itself. Officers in these organizations did not report being a part of or even feeling like there were cliques in their organization. In the absence of this organizational holding is where I observed community holding spaces. Yet, these community holding spaces were just one part of a parallel response to an absence of organizational holding. In addition to finding psychological safety through their community holding spaces, officers reported conforming to the façade of self-sufficiency when in the presence of outsiders. This parallel response serves to reinforce the absence of organizational holding and represents a collusion with the dysfunctional norms (Kahn, 2001). This dissertation contributes to holding environment literature by demonstrating how organizational norms can inhibit a sense of secure holding via the organization itself and in its place, encourage a more fragile, tenuous, and perpetually dysfunctional sense of holding within the organization. In this way, not all holding leads to secure, functional attachment and psychological safety.

Thus, while community holding spaces provide unparalleled benefits in the absence of organizational holding, they only make the existing dysfunction tolerable. This presents a challenge to Petriglieri and colleagues' (2019) provocative claim that "organizational holding is the surrogate of a personally cultivated one" (156). The individuals in Study 2 who worked for organizations with holding environments reported qualitatively different experiences around feeling safe in their work as compared to those who worked in the absence of such holding. In this life-and-death work, the moments of holding in community holding spaces are just that: brief, fleeting, and serve only as punctuations in otherwise isolating and tragic work.

Alternatively, those who experienced organizational holding reported far fewer disruptions in their sense of safety in this work. Altogether, these findings contribute to our understanding that community holding spaces or any kind of personally cultivated holding spaces are not a sufficient substitute for organizational holding. Conceptually, this clarifies that while a PSOC with certain members of an organization can create and sustain holding environments, this PSOC is not a substitute for the broader psychologically safety experienced at the organizational level.

Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, this work yields insight into informal organizational processes and cultural norms that shape how members heal from traumatic events through emotional processing with others to improve overall well-being. Research has shown that workers suffering from emotional overload and exhaustion, burnout, and PTSD – all negative effects associated with unprocessed emotions - are more prone to disengagement from work (Maslach & Leiter, 2006), compassion fatigue (Figley, 1995), and depersonalization (Maslach, 1993). Research suggests that in the face of routine exposure to trauma, individuals can learn to engage in intrapersonal processes such as emotional numbing (Feeny et al., 2000; Litz et al., 1997) or coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) as ways to shield and protect oneself against traumatic experiences. Other research suggests that relational mechanisms such as compassion (Dutton, Workman, & Hardin, 2014; Lilius et al., 2008) and social support (Maslach & Jackson, 1984) can serve as a buffer to the negative effects of trauma. However, these do not address the emotional experience directly. In contrast, emotional processing goes directly to the emotional experience and enables individuals to defuse the emotional burden associated with traumatic events.

Assuredly, the psychological well-being of employees is important, regardless of occupation. Psychological well-being is especially critical for those engaged in life-and-death work, as the psychological burden of unprocessed trauma can become catastrophic. Thus, understanding and supporting emotional processing in these contexts is crucial. This study demonstrates how individuals can, through relationships within a trusted community, overcome counterproductive norms and begin to heal from the trauma in life-and-death work. This is especially important as many police departments today are still implicitly and explicitly encouraging emotional suppression and discouraging more open emotional processing.

Additionally, this study sheds light on the ways physical isolation interferes with a PSOC at work. For many of my informants, this physical isolation is getting worse rather than better, with informants reporting staff shortages that are 20-40% below staff counts in 2020. These shortages are reportedly due to fewer applicants going into police academies, officer retirements, coupled with departmental budget cuts that reduce the number of police on the road. One particular department is operating with 60% of the staff they had in 2019 while their crime rate has gone up 80%. Staff shortages have two major effects on officers related to this study: 1) few to no opportunities for two-person patrols and 2) reduced down time for interaction within their trusted community at work. These are the same organizations where members reported not experiencing an organizational-level PSOC. Yet literature has clearly demonstrated the positive influence of a PSOC on well-being (e.g., Boyd & Nowell, 2014). Given the exacerbating effect of physical isolation on well-being in this context, departments need to be proactive about creating meaningful opportunities for officers to connect on shift, improving the chances of PSOC emergence and thus, holding environments. These moments, however brief, allow officers to meet their basic human need to feel safe and held despite the inherent dangers in the work.

When officer’s needs are met in this way, there is less need for them to feel safe through self-sufficiency and maintain perceptions of invulnerability, which we saw from the retired police officer Cline, is “… selfish recklessness that too often nets our family a eulogy and a flag they don't want” (Police1, 2015).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As research on processing emotions with colleagues at work has been limited, I chose to engage a grounded theory methodology to begin to explore how individuals might go about doing this, and in particular, how they might go about doing this within organizations that would seem to forbid such emotional openness. While staying grounded in my informants’ native language, following the principles of grounded theory and iterating between existing theory and my data enabled me to gain new insights about how individuals go about processing their emotions with others in life-and-death work. As with any study, I acknowledge the limitations to this dissertation that provide opportunities for future research.

First, my conclusions about the emergence of a PSOC need to be further studied in ways that allow for real-time, longitudinal understanding of the emergence dynamics. Specifically, I encourage future research that captures detailed accounts from multiple perspectives at the earliest stages of community emergence. While my study begins by asking community members about how they came to be a part of that community, I rely on retrospective accounts of this emergence and community creation. Additionally, while my field work in Study 1 enabled me to collect perspectives from several members of one community, the importance of these communities did not emerge in my data until I had already exited the field. The ongoing COID-19 pandemic prevented me from engaging in such field work in Study 2, so my understanding community emergence relied, in most cases, on one member’s account. Future research could supplement these findings through continued observation and in-depth interviews during the actual emergence of community with several members of the community. Doing so will enrich our understanding of the discernment processes detailed in Study 2 and add further nuance to our understanding of how individuals work together to co-create a PSOC.

Second, I realize there are inherent limitations to the generalizability of this dissertation due to the focus on police work. Police work is somewhat unique in the structure of work, its paramilitary nature, and the content of the work. It has otherwise been generalized as dirty work (Dick, 2005), mens' work (Prokos & Padavic, 2002), and a necessary evil (Margolis & Molinsky, 2008). In this dissertation, I see police work as generalizing to a particular category of work, life-and-death work, where members are routinely exposed to situations where their own life and/or the life of another may be at stake. This type of work surfaces both the emotional and physical vulnerabilities associated with these types of situations, which allowed me to observe how members navigate these vulnerabilities. While this presents an extreme case of the type of vulnerability that may be expected through the natural course of performing one's work duties, vulnerability is entirely human, and thus, will present regardless of work context. Thus, human vulnerability is entirely generalizable. Yet, we might expect that how individuals come to embrace or deflect this vulnerability may change according to the work context. For example, a teacher struggling with the loss of a student may still be prompted to seek community; yet the particular thresholds that individuals and spaces need to meet to become community holding spaces will likely differ. While mortality salience was particularly relevant in this context, that is unlikely to be the case in other situations. Future research would benefit from exploring how community and space thresholds present in different context – both at work and outside of work – to better understand how community members actively discern community safe spaces.

Lastly, the sampling methods used in Study 2 were intentionally designed to broaden my understanding of the dynamics of interest given the single case study method used in Study 1. Such broad recruiting has its own challenges, especially given the sensitive nature of this dissertation. While I could rely on rapport-building to reach interview participants in Study 1, that was not possible in Study 2. Recruiting police officers for Study 2 was slow and did not yield a surplus of informants. In this way, I was unable to explore sources of individual difference around ethnicity and gender. Yet, some scholars suggest that minority status may influence whether and how individuals may seek holding (Kahn, 2001). This may be especially true given the tenuous racial dynamics inherent in police work and heightened in recent years. Future research should explore sources of individual differences around ethnicity and gender and whether these differences influence how individuals come to experience a sense of safety in the absence of organizational holding. Specifically, future research could test whether the demographic differences meaningfully influence the parallel processes depicted in Figure 3.2 around the emergence of PSOC and community holding environments.

Beyond future research that aims to address the limitations of this dissertation, I see three other areas for future research that emerged from these studies. First, Study One shed light on three key boundaries that were necessary for the enactment of relational emotional processing: social boundaries, physical boundaries, and time boundaries. In Study Two, I drew on the PSOC, physical space, and holding environment literatures to further develop my understanding of the social and physical boundaries and their influence on relational emotional processing. Thus far, I have yet to explore the time boundary. Yet, across both studies, it is apparent that time is an important dimension that is likely to influence relational emotional processing interactions, as well as the communities in which these interactions are embedded. For example, both studies explored relational emotional processing interactions that took place during the work day. For these interactions to take place, individuals must actively carve out time for self-care and community responsibility (care for others) amidst the work-related demands for efficiency and efficacy in life-and-death work. Several of my informants in Study Two reported the challenge these efficiency demands represent in today's police work, as many departments across the country are facing police shortages. These shortages are likely to limit or otherwise influence the time available for officers to engage in these informal interactions at work, especially in organizations that discourage such socializing. Future research could explore how police officers manage the tension between their work demands and their community responsibilities in a profession where time is a precious and scarce resource.

Second, biased by the findings of Study One, I was surprised to hear several informants describing organizational norms that facilitated rather than discouraged the elaboration and open management of emotional experiences – norms akin to what we would see in a holding environment. However, as I was interested in exploring how relational emotional processing was possible in organizations that would seem to forbid it, I focused much of my analysis on the organizations that lacked holding environments. Yet these other organizations – those with holding environments - provide hints regarding an alternative set of organizational norms, practices, and strategies for dealing with the unavoidable negative emotional experiences in life-and-death work. Future research could yield important theoretical and practical insights regarding positive organizational tactics for mental health, psychological safety, and community-building for life-and-death professions and beyond. A study that explores best practices and individual and organizational outcomes could produce a useful guide for law enforcement agencies across the US to generate the widespread change needed.

Lastly, the findings of Study 2 revealed the complex nature of community in this setting as both necessary yet fragile. Harry's narrative of his profound experience of betrayal brought me a moment of pause. Equipped with only my knowledge of the beneficial outcomes of experiencing a PSOC (Hilbrecht et al., 2017; Peterson, Speer, & McMillan, 2008; Prezza & Pacilli, 2007; Zani & Cicognani, 2012), I was unprepared to explore Harry's deep sense of a loss of community. Yet there were hints in the accounts of other informants of PSOC loss and betrayal. Future qualitative research could build on this study and provide rich accounts of the lived experiences of individuals who suffer a loss of a PSOC or community betrayal. This would supplement my findings and provide perhaps a third inter-related process to the two depicted in Figure 3.2.

Conclusion

Feeling safe is a basic and essential human need. When the nature of work challenges this sense of safety, it is important to consider how organizational routines, structures, and norms enable or interfere with this sense of safety. Drawing on literature of holding environments, physical spaces, community and a psychological sense of community, and emotional processing, and on the experiences of individual police, this dissertation explores how individuals come to feel a sense of psychological safety in life-and-death work. Specifically, this dissertation shows how psychological safety is experienced when the organization itself does not provide this safety through a holding environment. Through two qualitative inductive studies, I show that in the absence of organizational holding, individuals create community holding spaces in which they feel psychologically safe. These holding spaces enable individuals to process their emotions with trusted others in safe spaces and overcome the counterproductive norms of their organization. I argue that while these community holding spaces fill a vital need in the absence of organizational holding, they are not an adequate substitute for the systemic change needed in law enforcement.

REFERENCES

Abraham, R. (1998). Emotional dissonance in organizations: Antecedents, consequences, and moderators. *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs*, 124(2), 229-246.

Adams, R. E., Boscarino, J. A., & Figley, C. R. (2006). Compassion fatigue and psychological distress among social workers: A validation study. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 76(1), 103-108.

Adler, P.A. and Adler, P. (1987). *Membership Roles in Field Research*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.

Violati, J.M., & Paton, D. (1999). *Police trauma: Psychological aftermath of civilian combat*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, LTD.

Allan, T. H., & Allan, K. H. (1971). Sensitivity for community leaders. *Proceedings of the 79th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association*, 6, 577-570.

Allen, K., Blascovich, J., & Mendes, W.B. (2002). Cardiovascular reactivity and the presence of pets, friends, and spouses: The truth about cats and dogs. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 64, 727–739.

American Psychological Association. (2019). *Americans becoming more open about mental health*. APA.org. Retreived from: https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/apa-mental-health-report.pdf.

Amir, N., Stafford, J., Freshman, M. S., & Foa, E. B. (1998). Relationship between trauma narratives and trauma pathology. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 11(2), 385-392.

Andrew, S. (2020, August 12). Americans' confidence in police falls to its lowest level in nearly three decades, new Gallup poll shows. *CNN*. Retrieved from http://cnn.com

Applegate, J. S. (1997). The holding environment: An organizing metaphor for social work theory and practice. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 68(1), 7-29.

Ashforth, B. E., & Humphrey, R. H. (1993). Emotional labor in service roles: The influence of identity. *Academy of Management Review*, 18(1), 88-115.

Ashforth, B.E., Kreiner, G.E., & Fugate, M. (2000). All in a day's work: Boundaries and micro role transitions. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(3): 472-491.

Atkins, P. W., & Parker, S. K. (2012). Understanding individual compassion in organizations: The role of appraisals and psychological flexibility. *Academy of Management Review*, 37(4), 524-546.

Baker, R., Holloway, J., Thomas, P. W., Thomas, S., & Owens, M. (2004). Emotional processing and panic. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 42(11), 1271-1287.

Baker, R., Owens, M., Thomas, S., Whittlesea, A., Abbey, G., Gower, P., ... & Thomas, P. W. (2012). Does CBT facilitate emotional processing? *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 40(1), 19.

Baker, R., Thomas, S., Thomas, P. W., Gower, P., Santonastaso, M., & Whittlesea, A. (2010). The Emotional Processing Scale: scale refinement and abridgement (EPS-25). *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 68(1), 83-88.

Baker, R., Thomas, S., Thomas, P. W., & Owens, M. (2007). Development of an emotional processing scale. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 62(2), 167-178.

Bakker, A.B., & Hueven, E. (2006). Emotional dissonance, burnout, and in-role performance among nurses and police officers. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 13(4): 423-440.

Barlow, D.H. (1988). *Anxiety and its disorders: The nature and treatment of anxiety and panic*. New York: Guilford Press.

Barsade, S.G., & O’Neill, O.A. (2014). What’s love got to do with it? A longitudinal study of the culture of companionate love and employee and client outcomes in a long-term care setting. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 59(4): 551-598.*

Bean, H.B. (1971). *The effects of a role-model and instructions on group interpersonal openness and cohesiveness*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV.

Begley, T. M. (1998). Coping strategies as predictors of employee distress and turnover after an organizational consolidation: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 71(4), 305-329.

Berger, R., & Weiss, T. (2009). The posttraumatic growth model: An expansion to the family system. *Traumatology,* 15(1), 63-74.

Berry, D. S., & Pennebaker, J. W. (1993). Nonverbal and verbal emotional expression and health. *Psychotherapy and psychosomatics*, 59(1), 11-19.

Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowball sampling: Problems and techniques of chain referral sampling. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 10(2): 141-163.

Blatt, R., & Camden, C. T. (2007). Positive Relationships and Cultivating Community. In J. E. Dutton & B. R. Ragins (Eds.), *LEA's organization and management series. Exploring positive relationships at work: Building a theoretical and research foundation* (p. 243–264). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Bohm, D. (1990). *On dialogue*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Bond, M. A. (2007). *Workplace chemistry: Promoting diversity through organizational change*. Upne.

Borg, L. K. (2013). *Holding, attaching and relating: a theoretical perspective on good enough therapy through analysis of Winnicott's good enough mother, using Bowlby's attachment theory and relational theory*. Unpublished Master's Thesis, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

Boscarino, J. A., Figley, C. R., & Adams, R. E. (2004). Compassion fatigue following the September 11 terrorist attacks: A study of secondary trauma among New York City social workers. *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health*, 6(2), 57.

Bothne, N., & Keys, C.B. (2016). Creating community life among immigrant survivors of torture and their allies. *Torture Journal*, 26(2): 16-21.

Boyd, N. M., & Nowell, B. (2014). Psychological sense of community: A new construct for the field of management. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 23(2), 107-122.

Brewin, C. R., Andrews, B., & Valentine, J. D. (2000). Meta-analysis of risk factors for posttraumatic stress disorder in trauma-exposed adults. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 68(5), 748.

Bride, B. E., Jones, J. L., & MacMaster, S. A. (2007). Correlates of secondary traumatic stress in child protective services workers. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 4(3-4), 69-80.

Brodsky, A. E., O'Campo, P. J., & Aronson, R. E. (1999). PSOC in community context: Multi-level correlates of a measure of psychological sense of community in low-income, urban neighborhoods. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 27(6), 659-679.

Burke, R. (1993). Work-family stress, conflict, coping, and burnout in police officers. *Stress and Health*, 9(3): 171-180.

Burroughs, S. M., & Eby, L. T. (1998). Psychological sense of community at work: A measurement system and explanatory framework. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 26(6), 509-532.

Butts, D. (1997). Joblessness, pain, power, pathology, and promise. *Journal of Organizational Change Management,* 10(2): 111-129.

Cartel, M., Kibler, E., & Dacin, M. T. (2022). Unpacking "Sense of Place" and "Place-making" in Organization Studies: A Toolkit for Place-sensitive Research. The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 58(2): 350-363.

Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., & Weintraub, J. K. (1989). Assessing coping strategies: a theoretically based approach. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 56(2), 267.

Chamberlain, J., & Miller, M. (2008). Stress in the courtroom: Call for research. *Psychiatry, Psychology, and Law*, 15.2: 237-250.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Chaskin, R. J. (2001). Building community capacity: A definitional framework and case studies from a comprehensive community initiative. *Urban Affairs Review*, 36(3), 291-323.

Chetkovich, C. A. (1997). *Real heat: Gender and race in the urban fire service*. Rutgers University Press.

Cheverst, K., Galani, A., Kray, C., Taylor, N., & Rouncefield, M. (2008). *The challenge of evaluating situated display based technology interventions designed to foster "sense of community.*" Lancaster, UK: Lancaster University.

Chiles, T. H. (2003). Process theorizing: Too important to ignore in a kaleidic world. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 2: 288-291.

Clair, J. A., & Dufresne, R. L. (2004). Playing the grim reaper: How employees experience carrying out a downsizing. *Human Relations*, 57(12), 1597-1625.

Cockcroft, T. (2005). Using oral history to investigate police culture. *Qualitative Research*, 5(3), 365-384.

Collinson, D. L. (1988). 'Engineering humour': masculinity, joking and conflict in shop-floor relations. *Organization Studies*, 9(2), 181-199.

Coman, G.J. (1993). *Trauma, stress and coping of police officers: An Australian police survey.* Paper presented at the Stress and Trauma in the Workplace Conference, Adelaide, Australia, April.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. L. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cortina, L. M., Magley, V. J., Williams, J. H., & Langhout, R. D. (2001). Incivility in the workplace: incidence and impact. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 6(1), 64.

Coughlin, J. J. (2002). Gallows humor and its use among police officers (Doctoral dissertation). James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA. Retrieved from *ProQuest Information & Learning.*

Coulehan J, Williams PC. Conflicting professional values in medical education. *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*. 2003;12(01):7–20

Cox, P., Schmitt, E., Bobrowski, P., & Graham, G. (2005). Enhancing the first-year experience for business students: Student retention and academic success. *Journal of Behavioral and Applied Management*, 7: 40-69.

Craun, S. W., & Bourke, M. L. (2014). The use of humor to cope with secondary traumatic stress. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 23(7), 840-852.

Creswell, J. (1998). *Data analysis and representation. Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among 5 traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crowe, S., & Brugha, R. (2018). "We've all had patients who've died…": Narratives of emotion and ideals of competence among junior doctors. *Social Science & Medicine*, 215, 152-159.

Cunliffe, A.L. (2010). Retelling Tales of the Field: In search of organizational ethnography 20 years on. *Organizational Research Methods*, 13(2): 224-239.

Czarnik, E. (2020 June 5). *Police, fire departments adjusting to COVID policies*. C&G News. https://Candgnews.com.

Dacin, M. T., Munir, K., & Tracey, P. (2010). Formal dining at Cambridge colleges: Linking ritual performance and institutional maintenance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(6), 1393-1418.

DaViera, A. L., Roy, A. L., Uriostegui, M., & Fiesta, D. (2020). Safe spaces embedded in dangerous contexts: How Chicago youth navigate daily life and demonstrate resilience in high-crime Neighborhoods. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 66(1-2), 65-80.

Davids, C. M., Watson, L. B., Nilsson, J. E., & Marszalek, J. M. (2015). Body dissatisfaction among gay men: The roles of sexual objectification, gay community involvement, and psychological sense of community. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 2(4), 376.

Dawson, S., Burnett, B., & O'Donohue, M. (2006). Learning communities: An untapped sustainable competitive advantage for higher education. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 20, 127-140.

Derlega, V. J., Margulis, S. T., & Winstead, B. A. (1987). A social-psychological analysis of self-disclosure in psychotherapy. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 5(2), 205-215.

Dick, P. (2005). Dirty work designations: How police officers account for their use of coercive force. *Human Relations*, 58(11), 1363-1390.

Difede, J., & Barocas, D. (1999). Acute intrusive and avoidant PTSD symptoms as predictors of chronic PTSD following burn injury. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 12(2), 363-369.

Dignam, J. T., Barrera, M., & West, S. G. (1986). Occupational stress, social support, and burnout among correctional officers. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 14(2), 177-193.

Driver, M. (2007). Meaning and suffering in organizations. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 20(5): 611-632.

Dutton, J. E., & Ragins, B. R. (2007). Moving Forward: Positive Relationships at Work as a Research Frontier. In J. Dutton and B. Ragins, *Exploring Positive Relationships at Work: Building a Theoretical and Research Foundation*, Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers.

Dutton, J. E., Worline, M. C., Frost, P. J., & Lilius, J. (2006). Explaining compassion organizing. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 51(1), 59-96.

Dutton, J.E., Workman, K.M., & Hardin, A.E. (2014). Compassion at Work. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 1: 277-304.

Eby, L., Hurst. C., & Butts, M. (2009). Qualitative research: The redheaded stepchild in organizational and social science research? In C. Lance & R. Vandenberg (Eds.), *Statistical and methodological myths and urban legends: Doctrine, verity and fable in the organizational and social sciences* (pp. 219-246). New York: Routledge.

Edmondson, A. C. (2018). *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. John Wiley & Sons.

Ehrlich, J. J., & Graeven, D. B. (1971). Reciprocal self-disclosure in a dyad. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 7: 389-400.

Eisenhardt, K. (1989). Building theories from case research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14: 532-550.

Eisenhardt, K. M., & Graebner, M. E. (2007). Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(1), 25-32.

Ekman, P. (1973). Cross culture studies of facial expression in P. Ekman (Ed.), *Darwin and facial expression: A century of research in review* (pp. 169-222). New York: Academic Press.

Elfenbein, H. A. (2007). Emotion in organizations: a review and theoretical integration. *Academy of Management Annals*, 1(1), 315-386.

Eron, L. D. (1955). Effect of medical education on medical students' attitudes. *Academic Medicine*, 30(10), 559-566.

Farber, B. A., Suzuki, J. Y., & Lynch, D. A. (2019). Positive regard and affirmation. In J. C. Norcross & M. J. Lambert (Eds.), *Psychotherapy relationships that work: Evidence-based therapist contributions* (pp. 288–322). Oxford University Press.

Farnham, S. D., McCarthy, J. F., Patel, Y., Ahuja, S., Norman, D., Hazlewood, W. R., & Lind, J. (2009). Measuring the impact of third place attachment on the adoption of a place-based community technology. In *Proceedings of the 27th International Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 2153-2156). Boston, MA: (CHI '09) ACM, NY.

Feeny, N. C., Zoellner, L. A., Fitzgibbons, L. A., & Foa, E. B. (2000). Exploring the roles of emotional numbing, depression, and dissociation in PTSD. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 13(3), 489-498.

Feldman Barrett, L., & Russell, J. A. (1999). The structure of current affect: Controversies and emerging consensus. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 8, 10–14.

Ferris, G. R., Liden, R. C., Munyon, T. P., Summers, J. K., Basik, K. J., & Buckley, M. R. (2009). Relationships at work: Toward a multidimensional conceptualization of dyadic work relationships. *Journal of Management*, 35(6), 1379-1403.

Festinger, L. (1950). Laboratory experiments: The role of group belongingness. In J.G. Miller (Ed.), *Experiments in social process*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Field, E., Jayachandran, S., Pande, R., & Rigol, N. (2016). Friendship at work: Can peer effects catalyze female entrepreneurship?. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 8(2), 125-53.

Figley, C. R. (1995). Compassion fatigue: Toward a new understanding of the costs of caring. In B.H. Stamm (Ed.), S*econdary traumatic stress: Self-care issues for clinicians, researchers, and educators*, (p.3-28).

Figley, C. R. (2002). *Treating compassion fatigue*. Routledge.

Figley, C. R. (1999). Police compassion fatigue (PCF): Theory, research, assessment, treatment, and prevention. In J.M. Violanti & D. Paton (Eds.), *Police trauma: Psychological aftermath of civilian combat,* (p.37-53), Charles C Thomas Publisher.

Fineman S. (1993). *Emotion in organizations*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Fischer, A. H., & Manstead, A. S. (2016). Social functions of emotion and emotion regulation. *Handbook of emotions*, 4, 424-439.

Fisher, A. T., Sonn, C. C., & Bishop, B. J. (Eds.). (2002). *Psychological sense of community: Research, applications, and implications*. Springer Science & Business Media.

Flannery Jr, R. B. (1990). Social support and psychological trauma: A methodological review. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 3(4), 593-611.

Foa ,E. B. (1997). Psychological processes related to recovery from a trauma and an effective treatment for PTSD. In: Yehuda R, McFarlane A (eds.) *Psychobiology of PTSD Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, New York, pp. 410–24.

Foa, E. B., & Kozak, M. J. (1986). Emotional processing of fear: exposure to corrective information. *Psychological Bulletin*, 99(1), 20.

Foa, E. B., & McNally, R. J. (1986). Sensitivity to feared stimuli in obsessive-compulsives: A dichotic listening analysis. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 10(4), 477-485.

Foa, E. B., Huppert, J. D., & Cahill, S. P. (2006). *Emotional Processing Theory: An Update.* In B. O. Rothbaum (Ed.), *Pathological anxiety: Emotional processing in etiology and treatment* (p. 3–24). The Guilford Press.

Foa, E.B. & Riggs, D. (1993). Posttraumatic stress disorder and rape. *American Psychiatric Press Review of Psychiatry*, 12.

Foa, E.B., Riggs, D., & Gershuny, B. (1995). Arousal, numbing, and intrusion: Symptom structure of PTSD following assault. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 152, 116-120.

Foa, E. B., Steketee, G., & Rothbaum, B. O. (1989). Behavioral/cognitive conceptualizations of post-traumatic stress disorder. *Behavior Therapy*, 20(2), 155-176.

Folkman, Susan. (1984). Personal control and stress and coping processes: a theoretical analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46 (4), 839.

Folkman, S., & Moskowitz, J. T. (2004). Coping: Pitfalls and promise. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 55, 745-774.

French, R., & Vince, R. (1999). *Group relations, management and organization*. Oxford University Press.

Freud, S. (1910). The origin of psychoanalysis. Reprinted in *A general selection of the works of Freud*. (Edited by J. Rickman). Hogarth Press, London.

Frost, P. J. (1999). Why compassion counts! *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 8(2), 127-133.

Frost, P.J. (2003). *Toxic emotions at work: How compassionate managers handle pain and conflict*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Frost, P.J. Dutton, J.E., Maitlis, S., Lilius, J.M., Kanov, J.M., & Worline, M.C. (2006). Seeing organizations differently: Three lenses on compassion. In: S. Clegg, C. Hardy, T.B. Lawrence, & W.R. Nord (eds), *The sage handbook of organization studies, second edition*, (843-866). London: Sage.

Frye, J. S., & Stockton, R. A. (1982). Discriminant analysis of posttraumatic stress disorder among a group of Viet Nam veterans. *The American Journal of Psychiatry*.

Fyson, S. J. (2008). Using discourse analysis and psychological sense of community to understand school transitions. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 36, 452-467.

Garland, C. (2002). The traumatized group. In C. Garland (Ed.), *Understanding trauma*: 183-198. London: Karnac Books.

Garrett, L. E., Spreitzer, G. M., & Bacevice, P. A. (2017). Co-constructing a sense of community at work: The emergence of community in coworking spaces. *Organization Studies*, 38(6), 821-842.

Gay, M. C., Baker, R., Vrignaud, P., Thomas, P., Heinzlef, O., Haag, P., ... & Thomas, S. (2019). Cross-cultural validation of a French version of the Emotional Processing Scale (EPS-25). *European Review of Applied Psychology*, 69(3), 91-99.

Gerlock, A. A., Grimesey, J., & Sayre, G. (2014). Military-related posttraumatic stress disorder and intimate relationship behaviors: A developing dyadic relationship model. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 40(3), 344-356.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory.* Chicago: Adeline, USA.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1977). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine-Athestor.

Glynn, T. J. (1981). Psychological sense of community: Measurement and application. *Human Relations*, 34(9), 789-818.

Goldberg, P. (1989). Actively seeking the holding environment: Conscious and unconscious elements in the building of a therapeutic framework. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 25(3), 448-476.

Gordon, S. (1981). The sociology of sentiments and emotion. In *Social Psychology: Sociological Perspectives*, ed. M. Rosenberg and R. H. Turner. New York: Basic Books.

Graf, F.A. (1986). The relationship between social support and occupational stress among police officers. *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, 14: 178-186.

Grandey, A. A. (2000). Emotional regulation in the workplace: A new way to conceptualize emotional labor. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 5(1), 95.

Greenberg, J., Pyszczynski, T., & Solomon, S. (1986). The causes and consequences of the need for self-esteem: A terror management theory. In R. F. Baumeister (Ed.), *Public self and private self* (pp. 189 –212). New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.

Greinacher, A., Derezza-Greeven, C., Herzog, W., & Nikendei, C. (2019). Secondary traumatization in first responders: a systematic review. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 10(1), 1562840.

Griffith, J., Steptoe, A., & Cropley, M. (1999). An investigation of coping strategies associated with job stress in teachers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 69(4), 517-531.

Gross, J. J. (1998). The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology*, 2(3), 271-299.

Grundy, S. (2000). Perceived work-related stressors, personality, and degree of burnout in firefighters. PhD Dissertation, *ProQuest Information & Learning*.

Gusfield, J. R. (1975). *Community: A critical response*. New York: Harper & Row.

Halbesleben, J. R. (2006). Sources of social support and burnout: a meta-analytic test of the conservation of resources model. Journal of Applied Psychology, 91(5), 1134.

Halpern, J. (2001). *From detached concern to empathy: Humanizing medical practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hansson, L., & Markström, U. (2014). The effectiveness of an anti-stigma intervention in a basic police officer training programme: a controlled study. *BMC Psychiatry*, 14(1), 1-8.

Harris, R.N. (1978). The police academy and the professional self-image. In P.K. Manning & J. Van Maanen (Eds.), *Policing: A view from the street*, (273-291). Santa Monica, CA: Goodyear.

Hazen, M.A. (2008). Grief and the workplace. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 22(3): 78-86.

Heaphy, E. D. (2007). Bodily insights: Three lenses on positive organizational relationships. *Exploring positive relationships at work: Building a theoretical and research foundation*, 47-71.

Heckathorn, Douglas D. (1997). Respondent-driven sampling: A new approach to the study of hidden populations. *Social Problems,* 44: 174–99.

Heckathorn, D. D. (2011). Comment: Snowball versus respondent-driven sampling. *Sociological Methodology*, 41(1): 355-366.

Heller, F. (2000). Creating a holding environment in an inner-city school. *Clinical Counselling in Schools,* 81-95.

Herman, J. L. (1997). *Trauma and recovery*. New York: BasicBooks.

Hesse, A. R. (2002). Secondary trauma: How working with trauma survivors affects therapists. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 30(3), 293-309.

Higgins, M. C., & Kram, K. E. (2001). Reconceptualizing mentoring at work: A developmental network perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 26(2), 264-288.

Hilbrecht, M., Lero, D. S., Schryer, E., Mock, S. E., & Smale, B. (2017). Understanding the association between time spent caregiving and well-being among employed adults: testing a model of work–life fit and sense of community. *Community, Work & Family*, 20(2), 162-180.

Hochschild, A.R. (1983). *The managed heart: The commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hofstede, G. (1998). Attitudes, values and organizational culture: Disentangling the concepts. *Organization Studies*, 19(3), 477-493.

Holmes, M.D. (2016, September 23). Plague of police shootings: Economic disadvantage in segregated African-American communities is at the core of the police violence problem. *U.S. News & World Report*. Retrieved from http://usnews.com

Hom, M. A., Stanley, I. H., Spencer-Thomas, S., & Joiner, T. E. (2018). Mental health service use and help-seeking among women firefighters with a career history of suicidality. *Psychological Services*, 15(3), 316.

Huggard, P., & Unit, G. (2013). A systematic review of the measurement of compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and secondary traumatic stress in physicians. *Australasian Journal of Disaster and Trauma Studies*, 1, 2013-1.

Huy, Q. N. (1999). Emotional capability, emotional intelligence, and radical change. *Academy of Management Review*, 24(2), 325-345.

Isaacs, W. (1999). *Dialogue: The art of thinking together*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Jackall, R. (2007). A detective's lot: Contours of morality and emotion in police work. In S. Fineman (Ed.), *Emotion in Organizations*, (227-240). London: Sage.

Jacobson. J.M. (2006). Compassion fatigue, compassion satisfaction, and burnout: Reactions among employee assistance professionals providing workplace crisis intervention and disaster management services. *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, 21: 133-152.

Jason, L. A., Stevens, E., & Ram, D. (2015). Development of a three-factor psychological sense of community scale. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 43(8), 973-985.

Jenkins, S. R., & Baird, S. (2002). Secondary traumatic stress and vicarious trauma: A validational study. *Journal of Traumatic Stress: Official Publication of The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies*, 15(5), 423-432.

Jorgensen, B. S., & Stedman, R. C. (2001). Sense of place as an attitude: Lakeshore owners attitudes toward their properties. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 21(3), 233-248.

Kahn, W.A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33(4), 692-724.

Kahn, W. A. (1993). Caring for the caregivers: Patterns of organizational caregiving. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 539-563.

Kahn, W. A. (2001). Holding environments at work. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 37(3), 260-279.

Kahn, W. (2003). The Revelation of Organizational Trauma, *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 39 (4): 364-380.

Kahn, W., Barton, M., Fellows, S. (2013). Organizational crises and the disturbance of relational systems, *Academy of Management Review*, 38 (3): 377-396.

Kaniasty, K. (2012). Predicting social psychological well-being following trauma: The role of postdisaster social support. *Psychological Trauma: theory, research, practice, and policy*, 4(1), 22.

Kanov, J. (2021). Why suffering matters! *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 30(1): 85-90.

Keenan, P., Royle, L., & Farrell, D. (2009). Issues of stigma for first responders accessing support for post-traumatic stress. *International journal of emergency mental health*, 11(2).

Kelley, J.R., & Barsade, S.G. (2001). Mood and emotions in small groups and work teams. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Process*, 86(1): 99-130.

Kintzle, S., Yarvis, J. S., & Bride, B. E. (2013). Secondary traumatic stress in military primary and mental health care providers. *Military Medicine*, 178(12), 1310-1315.

Kram, K. E. (1988). *Mentoring at work: Developmental relationships in organizational life*. University Press of America.

Ladge, J. J., Clair, J. A., & Greenberg, D. (2012). Cross-domain identity transition during liminal periods: Constructing multiple selves as professional and mother during pregnancy. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(6), 1449-1471.

Langley, A. (1999). Strategies for theorizing from process data. *Academy of Management Review*, 24(4): 691-710.

Latack, J. C. (1981). Person/role conflict: Holland's model extended to role-stress research, stress management, and career development. *Academy of Management Review*, 6(1), 89-103.

Lawrence, T. B., & Dover, G. (2015). Place and institutional work: Creating housing for the hard-to-house. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 60(3), 371-410.

Lazarus, R. S. (1966). *Psychological stress and the coping process*. McGraw-Hill.

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer publishing company.

Lee, T. W., Mitchell, T. R., & Sablynski, C. J. (1999). Qualitative research in organizational and vocational psychology, 1979-1999. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 55(2): 161-187.

Lee, M. Y., Mazmanian, M., & Perlow, L. (2020). Fostering positive relational dynamics: The power of spaces and interaction scripts. *Academy of Management Journal*, 63(1), 96-123.

Lepore, S. J., & Helgeson, V. S. (1998). Social constraints, intrusive thoughts, and mental health. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 17(1), 89-106.

Lilius, J. M., Worline, M. C., Maitlis, S., Kanov, J., Dutton, J. E., & Frost, P. (2008). The contours and consequences of compassion at work. Journal of Organizational Behavior: *The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, 29(2), 193-218.

Lilius, J. M., Worline, M. C., Dutton, J. E., Kanov, J. M., & Maitlis, S. (2011). Understanding compassion capability. Human relations, 64(7), 873-899.

Lincoln, J. R., & Miller, J. (1979). Work and friendship ties in organizations: A comparative analysis of relation networks. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 181-199.

Litz, B. T., Schlenger, W. E., Weathers, F. W., Caddell, J. M., Fairbank, J. A., & LaVange, L. M. (1997). Predictors of emotional numbing in posttraumatic stress disorder. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 10(4), 607-618.

Livne-Tarandach, R., & Jazaieri, H. (2020). Swift Sense of Community: Resourcing Artifacts for Rapid Community Emergence in a Temporary Organization. *Academy of Management Journal,* in press.

Lloyd, C., King, R., & Chenoweth, L. (2002). Social work, stress and burnout: A review. *Journal of Mental Health*, 11(3): 255-265.

Locke, K. (2001). *Grounded Theory in Management Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Lounsbury, J. W., & DeNeui, D. (1995). Psychological sense of community on campus. *College Student Journal*.

Lumsden, K., & Black, A. (2018). Austerity policing, emotional labour and the boundaries of police work: an ethnography of a police force control room in England. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 58(3), 606-623.

Lutgen-Sandvik, P. (2008). Intensive remedial identity work: Responses to workplace bullying trauma and stigmatization. *Organization*, 15(1): 97-119.

Mahalik, J. R., Good, G. E., & Englar-Carlson, M. (2003). Masculinity scripts, presenting concerns, and help seeking: Implications for practice and training. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 34(2), 123.

Maia, D.B., Marmar, C.R., Metzler, T., Nobrega, A., Berger, W., Mendlowicz, M.V., Coutinho, S., & Figueira, I. (2007). Post-traumatic stress symptoms in an elite unit of Brazilian police officers: Prevalence and impact on psychosocial functioning and on physical and mental health. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 97(1): 241-245.

Margolis, J. D., & Molinsky, A. (2008). Navigating the bind of necessary evils: Psychological engagement and the production of interpersonally sensitive behavior. *Academy of Management Journal*, 51(5), 847-872.

Marmar, C.R., Mccaslin, S.E., Metzler, T.J., Best, S., Weiss, D.S., Fagan, J., Liberman, A., Pole, N., Otte, C., Yehuda, R., Mohr, D., Neylan, T. (2006). Predictors of posttraumatic stress in police and other first responders. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1071(1): 1-18.

Marmarosh, C., Holtz, A., & Schottenbauer, M. (2005). Group Cohesiveness, Group-Derived Collective Self-Esteem, Group-Derived Hope, and the Well-Being of Group Therapy Members. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 9(1), 32.

Martin, S.E. (1999). Police force or public service? Gender and emotional labor. The Annals of the *American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 561: 111-126.

Martin, C., MKean, H., & Veltjamp, L. (1986). Post-traumatic stress disorder in police and working with victims: A pilot study. *Journal of Police Science and Administration*.

Maslach, C. (1982). *Burnout: The cost of caring*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Maslach, C. (1993). Burnout: A multidimensional perspective. In W. B. Schaufeli, C. Maslach, & T. Marek (Eds.), *Series in applied psychology: Social issues and questions. Professional burnout: Recent developments in theory and research* (p. 19–32). Taylor & Francis.

Maslach, C. (2003). Job burnout new directions in research and intervention. *Current Directions in Psychological Science,* 12(5): 189-192.

Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1984). Burnout in organizational settings. *Applied Social Psychology Annual*, 5: 133-153.

Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2006). Burnout. *Stress and quality of working life: current perspectives in occupational health*, 37, 42-9.

Matteson, M. T., & Ivancevich, J. M. (1979). Organizational stressors and heart disease: A research model. *Academy of Management Review*, 4(3), 347-357.

Maxwell, W. (2003). The use of gallows humor and dark humor during crisis situation. *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health*, 5(2), 93–98.

McGrath, J. E. (1976). Stress and behavior in organizations. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology*: 1351-1395. Chicago: Rand McNally.

McMillan, D.W., & Chavis, D.M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14, 6-23.

Michalopoulos, L. M., & Aparicio, E. (2012). Vicarious trauma in social workers: The role of trauma history, social support, and years of experience. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 21(6), 646-664.

Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. CA: Sage Publications.

Miller, L. (2007). Police families: Stresses, syndromes, and solutions. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 35, 21-40.

Miller, A.B., & Keys, C.B. (1996). Awareness, action, and collaboration: How the self-advocacy movement is empowering for persons with developmental disabilities. *Mental Retardation*, 34(5): 312-319.

Minkler, M., Vásquez, V. B., Tajik, M., & Petersen, D. (2008). Promoting environmental justice through community-based participatory research: The role of community and partnership capacity. *Health Education Behavior*, 35: 119-137.

Mitchell, J. T., & Everly, G. S. (1997). *Critical incident stress debriefing (CISD). An Operations Manual for the Prevention of Traumatic Stress Among Emergency Service and Disaster Workers*. Second Edition, Revised. Ellicott City: Chevron Publishing Corporation.

Modell, A. H. (1984). Self preservation and the preservation of the self. *Annual of Psychoanalysis*, 12, 69-86.

Molinsky, A., & Margolis, J. (2005). Necessary evils and interpersonal sensitivity in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 30(2): 245-268.

Monson, C. M., Schnurr, P. P., Resick, P. A., Friedman, M. J., Young-Xu, Y., & Stevens, S. P. (2006). Cognitive processing therapy for veterans with military-related posttraumatic stress disorder. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 74(5), 898.

Morris, J. A., & Feldman, D. C. (1997). Managing emotions in the workplace. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 9(3), 257-274.

Mueller, D., Bacalso, E., Ortega-Williams, A., Pate Jr, D. J., & Topitzes, J. (2021). A mutual process of healing self and healing the community: A qualitative study of coping with and healing from stress, adversity, and trauma among diverse residents of a midwestern city. *Journal of Community Psychology*: 1-26.

Newman, A., Donohue, R., & Eva, N. (2017). Psychological safety: A systematic review of the literature. *Human Resource Management Review*, 27(3), 521-535.

Nightingale, J., & Williams, R. M. (2000). Attitudes to emotional expression and personality in predicting post-traumatic stress disorder. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 39(3), 243-254.

O’Neill, O. A., & Rothbard, N. P. (2017). Is love all you need? The effects of emotional culture, suppression, and work–family conflict on firefighter risk-taking and health. *Academy of Management Journal,* 60(1), 78-108.

Paoline III, E. A. (2003). Taking stock: Toward a richer understanding of police culture. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 31(3), 199-214.

Papazoglou, K. (2016). Managing effective transitions: Presenting the different shades of police life and the pivotal role of mental health care providers in promoting officers’ wellbeing. *International Journal of Medical and Health Sciences*, 5, 121-122.

Papazoglou, K., & Tuttle, B. M. (2018). Fighting police trauma: Practical approaches to addressing psychological needs of officers. *Sage Open*, 8(3), 2158244018794794.

Parkinson, B. (1996). Emotions are social. *British Journal of Psychology*, 87(4), 663-683.

Pasciak, A. R., & Kelley, T. M. (2013). Conformity to traditional gender norms by male police officers exposed to trauma: Implications for critical incident stress debriefing. *Applied Psychology in Criminal Justice*, 9(2), 137-156.

Pascual-Leone, A., & Greenberg, L. S. (2007). Emotional processing in experiential therapy: Why" the only way out is through.". *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 75(6), 875.

Patton, M. Q. (2001). *Qualitative research and evaluation and methods* (3rd ed.). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Pearlman, L. A., & Saakvitne, K. W. (1995). *Trauma and the therapist: Countertransference and vicarious traumatization in psychotherapy with incest survivors*. WW Norton & Co.

Pearsall, M. J., & Ellis, A. P. (2011). Thick as thieves: the effects of ethical orientation and psychological safety on unethical team behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(2), 401.

Pennebaker, J. W., & Seagal, J. D. (1999). Forming a story: The health benefits of narrative. *Journal of clinical psychology*, 55(10), 1243-1254.

Pennebaker, J. W. (1990). *Opening up: The healing power of confiding in others*. William Morrow & Company.

Pennebaker, J. W. (1993). Putting stress into words: Health, linguistic, and therapeutic implications. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 31(6), 539-548.

Pennebaker, J. W. (1997). Writing about emotional experiences as a therapeutic process. *Psychological Science*, 8(3), 162-166.

Perkins, D., Florin, P., Rich, R., Wandersman, A., & Chavis, D. M. (1990). Participation and the social and physical environment of residential blocks: Crime and community context, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 18: 83-115.

Peterson, N. A., Speer, P. W., & McMillan, D. W. (2008). Validation of a brief sense of community scale: Confirmation of the principal theory of sense of community. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 36(1), 61-73.

Petriglieri, G., & Petriglieri, J. L. (2010). Identity workspaces: The case of business schools. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 9(1), 44-60.

Petriglieri, G., Ashford, S. J., & Wrzesniewski, A. (2019). Agony and ecstasy in the gig economy: Cultivating holding environments for precarious and personalized work identities. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 64(1), 124-170.

Police1. (2015). The danger of feeling invincible: A veteran cop looks back. *Police1*. www.police.com.

Pretty, G. M., & McCarthy, M. (1991). Exploring psychological sense of community among women and men of the corporation. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 19(4), 351-361.

Prezza, M., & Pacilli, M. G. (2007). Current fear of crime, sense of community, and loneliness in Italian adolescents: The role of autonomous mobility and play during childhood. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 35(2), 151-170.

Price, J. (1996). Doing gender: Men and emotion. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the *American Sociological Association*.

Proescholdbell, R. J., Roosa, M. W., & Nemeroff, C. J. (2006). Component measures of psychological sense of community among gay men. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 34(1), 9-24.

Prokos, A., & Padavic, I. (2002). 'There oughtta be a law against bitches': masculinity lessons in police academy training. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 9(4), 439-459.

Rachman, S. (1980). Emotional processing. *Behavior and Research Therapy*, 18: 51-60.

Rachman, S., & Hodgson, R. (1974). Synchrony and desynchrony in fear and avoidance. *Behavior research and therapy*, 12(4): 311-318.

Rachman, S. (2001). Emotional processing, with special reference to post-traumatic stress disorder. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 13(3), 164-171.

Rafaeli, A., & Worline, M. (2001). Individual emotion in work organizations. *Social Science Information*, 40(1), 95-123.

Rao, H., & Dutta, S. (2012). Free spaces as organizational weapons of the weak: Religious festivals and regimental mutinies in the 1857 Bengal Native Army. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 57(4), 625-668.

Rawski, S. L., & Workman-Stark, A. L. (2018). Masculinity contest cultures in policing organizations and recommendations for training interventions. *Journal of Social Issues*, 74(3): 607-627.

Regehr, C., Hill, J., Knott, T., & Sault, B. (2003). Social support, self-efficacy and trauma in new recruits and experienced firefighters. *Stress and Health*, 19(4), 189-193.

Reinstein, D. K. (2013). *To hold and be held: The therapeutic school as a holding environment*. Routledge.

Roemer, L., Litz, B. T., Orsillo, S. M., & Wagner, A. W. (2001). A preliminary investigation of the role of strategic withholding of emotions in PTSD. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 14(1), 149-156.

Rosen, M. (1991). Coming to terms with the field: Understanding and doing organizational ethnography. *Journal of Management Studies*, 28(1): 1-24.

Rowe, M. (1997). Hardiness, stress, temperament, coping, and burnout in health professionals. *American Journal of Health Behavior*.

Rupp, C., Doebler, P., Ehring, T., & Vossbeck-Elsebusch, A. N. (2017). Emotional processing theory put to test: A meta-analysis on the association between process and outcome measures in exposure therapy. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 24(3), 697-711.

Sarason,S.B.(1974).*The psychological sense of community: Perspectives for community psychology*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Schneekloth, L. H., & Shibley, R. G. (1995). *Placemaking: The art and practice of building communities*. New York: Wiley.

Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Sendler, D.J, Rutkowska, A., & Makara-Studzinska, M. (2016). How the exposure to trauma has hindered physicians' capacity to heal: prevalence of PTSD among healthcare workers. *The European Journal of Psychiatry*, 30(4), 321-334.

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York, NY: Currency Doubleday.

Shapiro, F. (2017). *Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy: Basic principles, protocols, and procedures*. Guilford Publications.

Shapiro, E. R., & Carr, A. W. (1991). *Lost in familiar places*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Sharp, M. L., Fear, N. T., Rona, R. J., Wessely, S., Greenberg, N., Jones, N., & Goodwin, L. (2015). Stigma as a barrier to seeking health care among military personnel with mental health problems. *Epidemiologic Reviews*, 37(1), 144-162.

Shortt, H. (2015). Liminality, space, and the importance of 'transitory dwelling places' at work. *Human Relations*, 68(4): 633-658.

Slochower, J. A. (2013). *Holding and psychoanalysis: A relational perspective*. Routledge.

Smith. A. C., and Kleinman. S. (1989). Managing emotions in medical schools: Students' contacts with the living and the dead. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 52:56-69.

Snibbe, J., Radcliffe, T., Weisberger, C., Richards, M., & Kelly, J. (1989). Burnout among primary care physicians and mental health professionals in a managed health care setting. *Psychological Reports*, 65(3): 775-780.

Soomro, S., & Yanos, P. T. (2019). Predictors of mental health stigma among police officers: the role of trauma and PTSD. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 34(2), 175-183.

Spradley, J. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Spradley, J. (1980). *Participant Observation.* Harcourt Brace Publishers.

Stephens, C., Long, N., & Miller, I. (1997). The impact of trauma and social support on posttraumatic stress disorder: A study of New Zealand police officers. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 25(4), 303-314.

Strauss, A.L., & Corbin, J.M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. London: Sage Publications.

Strauss, A.L., & Corbin, J.M. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research techniques.* London: Sage Publications.

Sutton, R. I. (1991). Maintaining norms about expressed emotions: The case of bill collectors. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 245-268.

Tangherlini, T. R. (1998). *Talking Trauma*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

Taylor, S. E. (2011). Social support: A review. In H. S. Friedman (Ed.), *Oxford library of psychology. The Oxford handbook of health psychology* (p. 189–214). Oxford University Press.

Taylor, S. E., & Stanton, A. L. (2007). Coping resources, coping processes, and mental health. Annual Review of Clinical Psychology, 3, 377-401.

Teasdale, J. D. (1999). Emotional processing, three modes of mind and the prevention of relapse in depression. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*.

Tedeschi, R. G., & Calhoun, L. (2004). Posttraumatic growth: A new perspective on psychotraumatology. *Psychiatric Times*, 21(4), 58-60.

Ting, L., Jacobson, J. M., Sanders, S., Bride, B. E., & Harrington, D. (2005). The secondary traumatic stress scale (STSS) confirmatory factor analyses with a national sample of mental health social workers. *Journal of human behavior in the social environment*, 11(3-4), 177-194.

Thompson, N., & Lund, D. A. (2017). *Loss, grief, and trauma in the workplace*. Routledge.

Tyler, P., & Cushway, D. (1995). Stress in nurses: The effects of coping and social support. *Stress Medicine*, 11(1), 243-251.

Van der Kolk, B. A. (1988). The trauma spectrum: The interaction of biological and social events in the genesis of the trauma response. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 1(3), 273-290.

Van der Merwe, A., & Hunt, X. (2019). Secondary trauma among trauma researchers: Lessons from the field. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 11(1), 10.

Van Kleef, G. A. (2009). How emotions regulate social life: The emotions as social information (EASI) model. *Current directions in psychological science*, 18(3), 184-188.

Van Maanen, J. (1973). Observations on the making of policemen. *Human organization*, 407-418.

Van Maanen, J. (1975). Police socialization: A longitudinal examination of job attitudes in an urban police department. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 207-228.

Van Maanen, J., & Schein, E. H. (1979). Toward a theory of organizational socialization. In: B.Staw (ed), *Research in Organizational Behavior* (209-269). Greenwhich, CT: JAI Press.

Van Maanen, J. (1980). Beyond account: The personal impact of police shootings. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 452: 145-156.

Van Maanen, J. 2010. You gotta have a grievance: Locating heartbreak in ethnography. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 19(4): 338-341.

Van Maanen, J., & Barley, S. R. (1982). Occupational communities: Culture and control in organizations. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 6: 287-365.

Van Maanen, J., & Kunda, G. (1989). Real feelings-emotional expression and organizational culture. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 11: 43-103.

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.

Violanti, J. M. (1992). Coping strategies among police recruits in a high-stress training environment. The Journal of social psychology, 132(6), 717-729.

Watson, T. J. (2011). Ethnography, reality, and truth: The vital need for studies of 'how things work'in organizations and management. *Journal of Management Studies*, 48(1), 202-217.

Webb, E., & Weick, K. (1979). Unobtrusive measures in organizational theory: A reminder. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24: 650-659.

Weber, M. (1946). *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Edited and translated by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press.

Weinfurtner, T., & Seidl, D. (2019). Towards a spatial perspective: An integrative review of research on organisational space. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 35(2), 101009.

Wener, R. (2012). *The environmental psychology of prisons and jails: Creating humane spaces in secure settings*. Cambridge University Press.

Whyte, W.F. (1984). Interviewing strategies and tactics. *Learning from the field*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Wilson, J. Q. (1968). Dilemmas of police administration. *Public Administration Review*, 28(5), 407-417.

Wilson, J. P., & Keane, T. M. (Eds.). (2004). *Assessing Psychological Trauma and PTSD*. Guilford press.

Winnicott, D. W. (1960). The theory of the parent-infant relationship. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 41, 585-595.

Woodall, S. J. (1997). Hearts on fire: An exploration of the emotional world of firefighters. *Clinical Sociology Review*, 15(1), 12.

Wright, A. L., Meyer, A. D., Reay, T., & Staggs, J. (2021). Maintaining places of social inclusion: Ebola and the emergency department. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 66(1), 42–85.

Yalom, I. D. (1995). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy* (4th ed.). New York: Basic Books.

Yang, J., & Mossholder, K.W. 2004. Decoupling task and relationship conflict: the role of intragroup emotional processing. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 25: 589-605.

Yanow, Dvora, 2009. Organizational ethnography and methodological angst: myths and challenges in the field. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*: 4(2): 186-199.

Yin, R. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2013). Validity and generalization in future case studyevaluations. *Evaluation*, 19(3), 321-332.

Zapf, D., Vogt, C., Seifert, C., Mertini, H., & Isic, A. (1999). Emotion work as a source of stress: The concept and development of an instrument. *European Journal of work and Organizational Psychology*, 8(3), 371-400.

Zani, B., & Cicognani, E. (2012). Sense of community in the work context. A study on members of a co-operative enterprise. *Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice*, 3(4), 1-8.

Zietsma, C., & Lawrence, T. B. (2010). Institutional work in the transformation of an organizational field: The interplay of boundary work and practice work. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 55(2), 189-221.

TABLES & FIGURES

Table 2.1: Study 1 Observation Activities

	Hours	%	Description
Ride Along	352	73%	Day, evening, and midnight shifts riding in police cars with one or two officers responding to calls
Dispatch	48	10%	In dispatch room observing calls being dispatched
Special Events	35	7%	National Police Week, D.C., Police Funeral
Training	30	6%	Defensive tactics, active shooter, use of force, counterterrorism, gun range
Meetings	18	4%	Daily roll call; Critical incident/stress management
TOTAL	483		

Table 2.2: Study 1 Interviews (by rank)

	Total Interviewed
Command Staff	3 (of 6)
Sergeants	6 (of 7)
Detectives	4 (of 5)
Patrol Officers	24 (of 34)
Dispatchers	7 (of 9)
TOTAL	44 (of 61)

Table 3.1: Interview Participants by Recruitment Strategy

Recruitment Strategy	**#**	**%**
Social media/virtual discussion board	40	78%
From another person	7	14%
Department memo/flyer	4	8%

Table 3.2: Interview Participants by Geography

Region	**#**	**%**
Northeast	13	25%
Midwest	13	25%
West	7	13%
Southeast	10	19%
Southwest	9	17%

Table 3.3: Interview Participants by Rank

	#	%
Patrol Staff	**43**	**84%**
Officers, Deputies	37	72%
Supervisors/Commanders	6	12%
Command staff	**8**	**16%**
Training & Accreditation	3	6%
Lieutenant	3	6%
Chief, Deputy Chief	2	4%

Table 3.4: Interview Participants by Tenure in Law Enforcement

Years in Law Enforcement	**#**	**%**
0-5	4	8%
6-10	14	29%
11-15	10	20%
16-20	7	14%
21+	16	33%

Table 3.5: Evidence of PSOC Dimensions in Data

PSOC Dimensions (McMillan & Chavis, 1986:9)	**Examples in Data**
Membership *a feeling of belonging or sharing a sense of personal relatedness*	"Yeah I'm a part of the parking lot gang (laughs). I know it sounds silly but it's who we are" (Sol) "We're just a like a big dysfunctional family. We're very close" (Mattie) "I have a group of maybe 3 people that I trust to talk about whatever with. I'd say we're a pretty close group." (Donna) "I have my few people that are my work community if you will – 4 of us who check in on one another during shift and generally stay close" (Dylan)
Influence *a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group, and of the group mattering to its members*	"I don't think it would be the same without any one of us. It wouldn't be the same kind of - it wouldn't be the parking lot gang if Joey stopped coming but I don't know what it would be. (Sol) "We all bring a little something…I bring the humor, like to keep everyone laughing and when they're laughing, I feel like I'm doing my part" (Erik) "It's like a team and we support each other. Every one of us gives 100% to this team and in return I think we all benefit 100% too. It's a given and take with all of us" (Ken) "We're not the Avengers or the A Team or whatever. We're more of a Motley Crue (laughs). But I think I have a lot of experience to share with them that they don't have given my time in the [military]" (Jorge)
Needs (integrated and fulfilled) *a feeling that members' needs will be met by the resources received through their membership in the group*	"It gives us a chance to just breathe and feel like that's okay, like it's okay to just stop being 'a cop' for like 10 minutes and just be a person. And to hash out whatever shit's bothering you" (Sol) "I know that whatever I have going on, I can talk to them and they won't judge me. They won't, well, they'll probably rib me for it later, but they'll be there. They'll help me through whatever it is and vice versa" (Paul) "You need that outlet sometimes and you need those few minutes to catch your breath and I'm grateful we have that and can do that for each other" (Nina) "You know, I don't know how people do this job without it [a group/community]. It keeps me here, keeps me sane. Keeps me feeling even remotely like a person some days (Wallace)

Emotional Connection *the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences*	"You know that every chance we get, we'll be in the lot. That's what you do" (Sol) "We've been there through each other's marriages, divorces – lot of divorce, kids, injuries, cancer, or so and so's mum died, you name it. When you go through this stuff together, you're bonded in a way. It's like a bond" (Erik) "I love these fricken guys. Like I'll tell them 'love you man'" (Jesse) "It isn't so much outside of work, but we know if it's a work thing, we're in it together. Dinner, gym, trainings, whatever. We're doing it together." (Isabel)
Responsibility *a commitment to the well-being of the group and its individual members* (Boyd & Nowell, 2014:110)	"You have to have everyone's back to some degree. I mean, I have to respond to any call for whoever on shift needs assistance. But for anyone in my gang it's like a level up from that. It's at a level of like, okay, you don't have to call and ask for help, like I'm already there. It's a level of commitment to these guys beyond what the job calls for." (Sol) "If there's anything I can do for them on the streets or whatever, I'm there. I'd do anything for them…I know they'd take a bullet for me if it came to it." (Avery) "I'm not just protecting myself, I'm protecting these guys every day on shift…yeah I think they do that for me too" (Dustin) "I don't know that it's expected, but we do more for each other [than for anyone else]. You got a rough call, I'm there. I had a call with a dead kid, they'll be there. You get to know what's gonna hit different for each person and you do whatever you can to help" (Mike)
	*I carried Sol throughout to demonstrate an individual experiencing all five dimensions. I included quotes from others to show range of responses.

Figure 2.1: Study 1 Data Structure [inspired by Corley & Gioia, 2004]

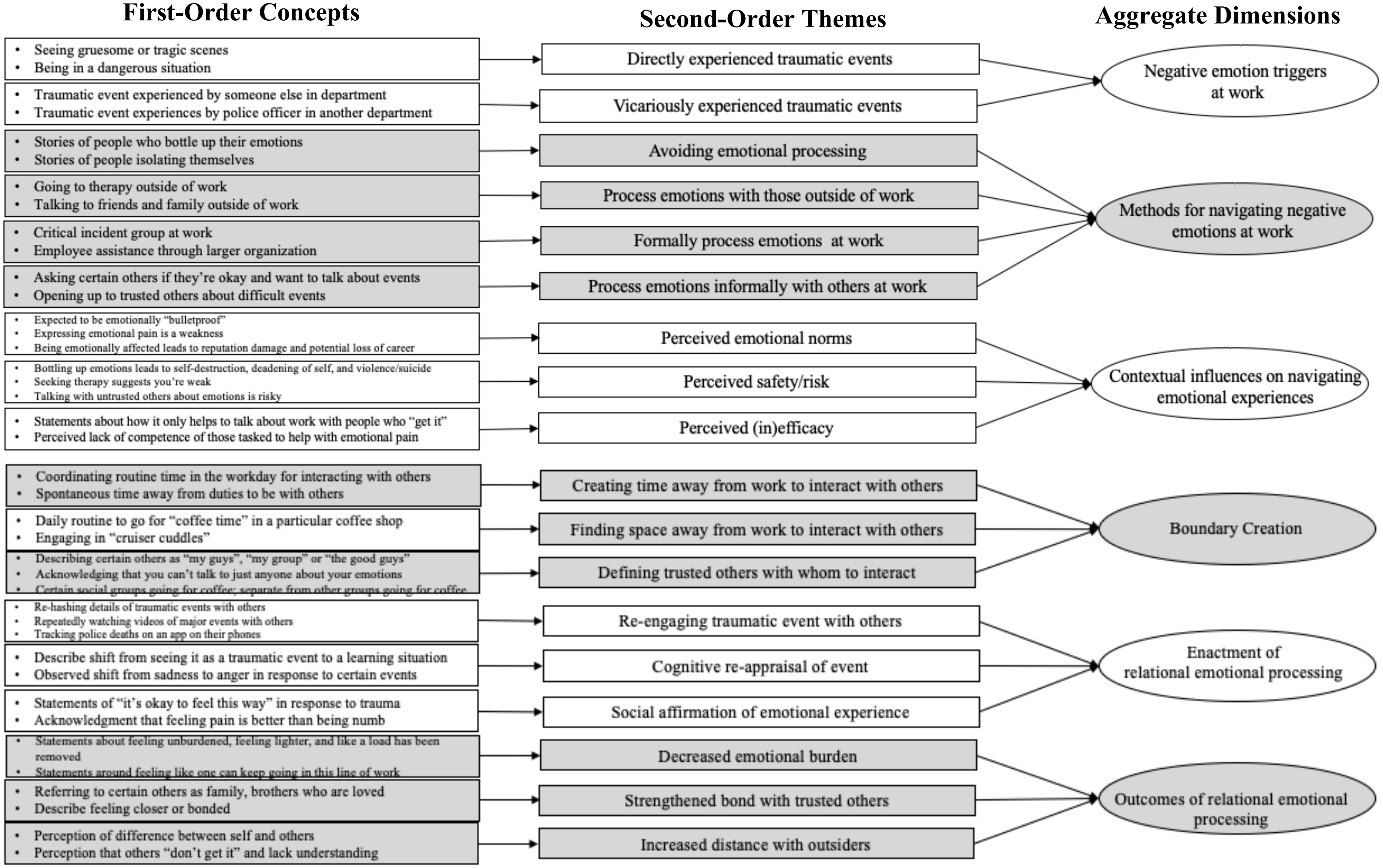

First-Order Concepts
Second-Order Themes
Aggregate Dimensions
Seeing gruesome or tragic scenes
Being in a dangerous situation
Directly experienced traumatic events
Traumatic event experienced by someone else in department
Traumatic event experiences by police officer in another department
Vicariously experienced traumatic events
Negative emotion triggers at work
Stories of people who bottle up their emotions
Stories of people isolating themselves
Avoiding emotional processing
Going to therapy outside of work
Talking to friends and family outside of work
Process emotions with those outside of work
Critical incident group at work
Employee assistance through larger organization
Formally process emotions at work
Asking certain others if they're okay and want to talk about events
Opening up to trusted others about difficult events
Process emotions informally with others at work
Methods for navigating negative emotions at work
Expected to be emotionally "bulletproof"
Expressing emotional pain is a weakness
Being emotionally affected leads to reputation damage and potential loss of career
Perceived emotional norms
Bottling up emotions leads to self-destruction, deadening of self, and violence/suicide
Seeking therapy suggests you're weak
Talking with untrusted others about emotions is risky
Perceived safety/risk
Statements about how it only helps to talk about work with people who "get it"
Perceived lack of competence of those tasked to help with emotional pain
Perceived (in)efficacy
Contextual influences on navigating emotional experiences
Coordinating routine time in the workday for interacting with others
Spontaneous time away from duties to be with others
Creating time away from work to interact with others
Daily routine to go for "coffee time" in a particular coffee shop
Engaging in "cruiser cuddles"
Finding space away from work to interact with others
Describing certain others as "my guys", "my group" or "the good guys"
Acknowledging that you can't talk to just anyone about your emotions
Certain social groups going for coffee; separate from other groups going for coffee
Defining trusted others with whom to interact
Boundary Creation
Re-hashing details of traumatic events with others
Repeatedly watching videos of major events with others
Tracking police deaths on an app on their phones
Re-engaging traumatic event with others
Describe shift from seeing it as a traumatic event to a learning situation
Observed shift from sadness to anger in response to certain events
Cognitive re-appraisal of event
Statements of "it's okay to feel this way" in response to trauma
Acknowledgment that feeling pain is better than being numb
Social affirmation of emotional experience
Enactment of relational emotional processing
Statements about feeling unburdened, feeling lighter, and like a load has been removed
Statements around feeling like one can keep going in this line of work
Decreased emotional burden
Referring to certain others as family, brothers who are loved
Describe feeling closer or bonded
Strengthened bond with trusted others
Perception of difference between self and others
Perception that others "don't get it" and lack understanding
Increased distance with outsiders
Outcomes of relational emotional processing

Figure 2.2: Methods for navigating negative emotions

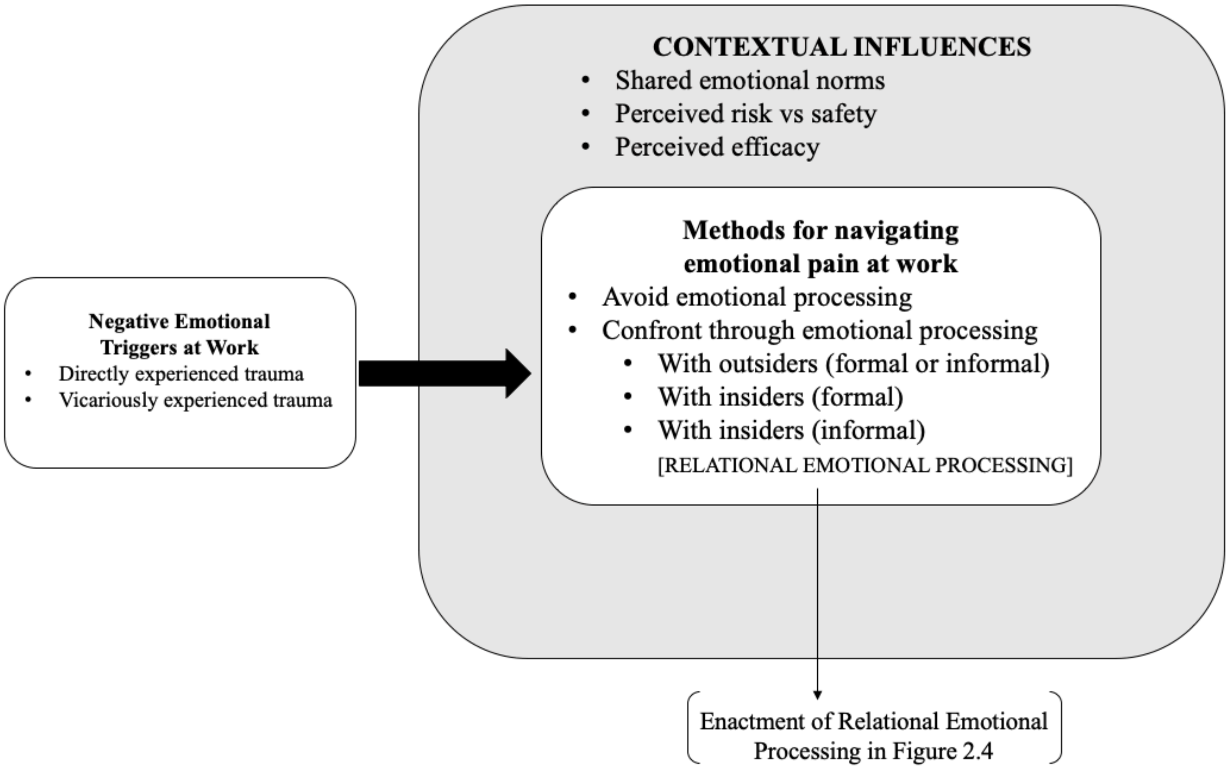

Negative Emotional Triggers at Work
• Directly experienced trauma
• Vicariously experienced trauma
CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES
• Shared emotional norms
• Perceived risk vs safety
• Perceived efficacy
Methods for navigating emotional pain at work
• Avoid emotional processing
• Confront through emotional processing
• With outsiders (formal or informal)
• With insiders (formal)
• With insiders (informal)
[RELATIONAL EMOTIONAL PROCESSING]
Enactment of Relational Emotional Processing in Figure 2.4

Figure 2.3: Perceived Safety & Effectiveness of Response Methods and Associated Frequency of Use

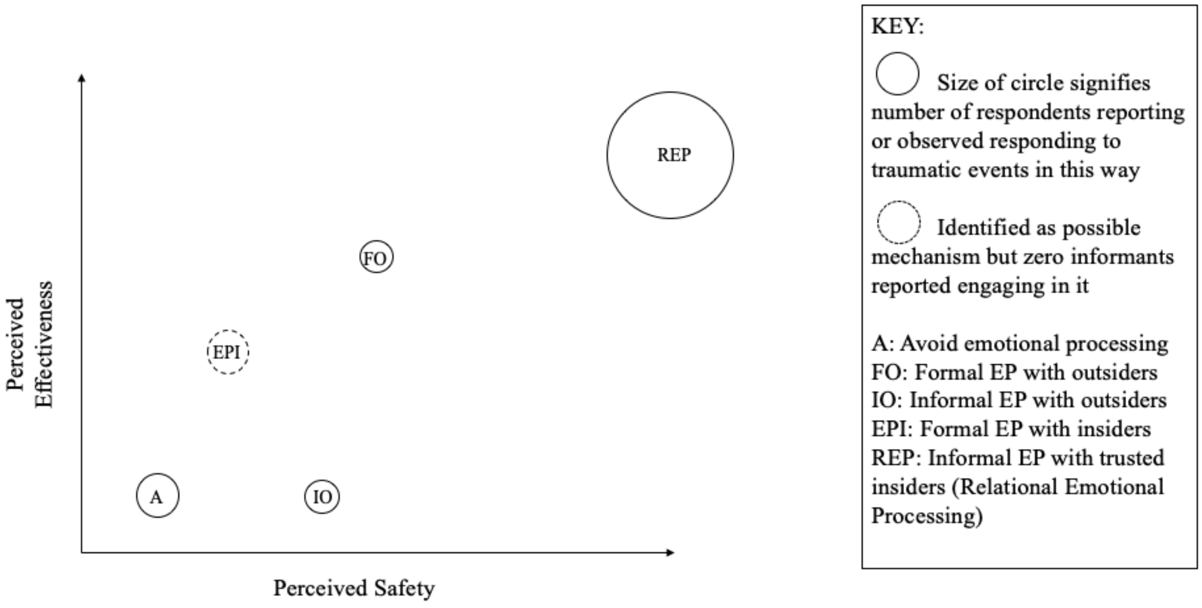


Figure 2.4: Relational Emotional Processing of Emotions

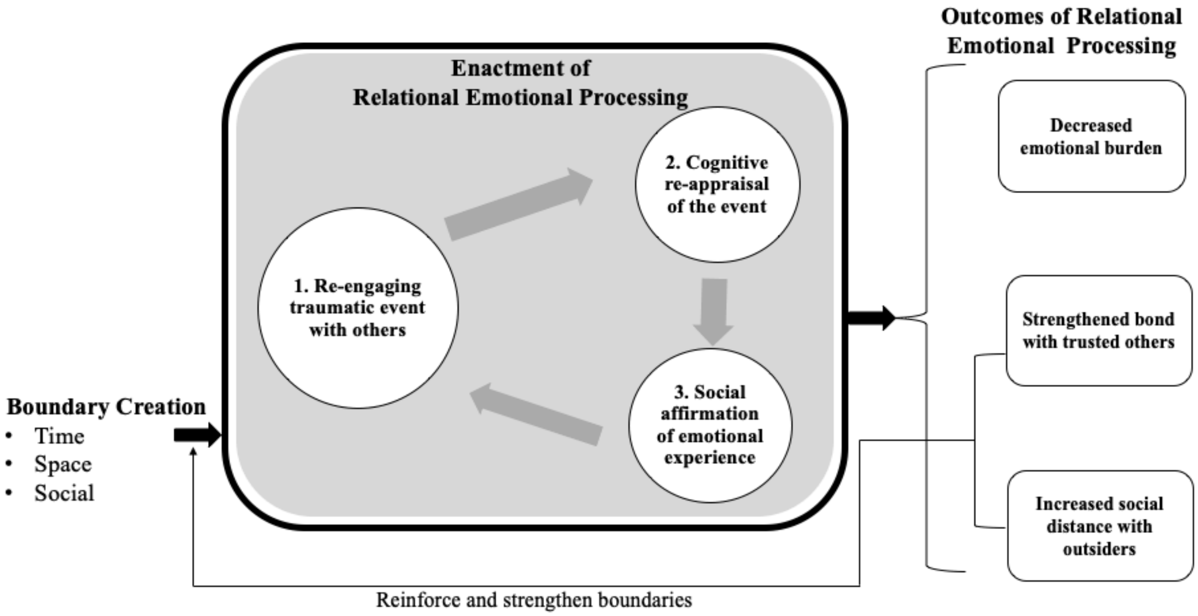
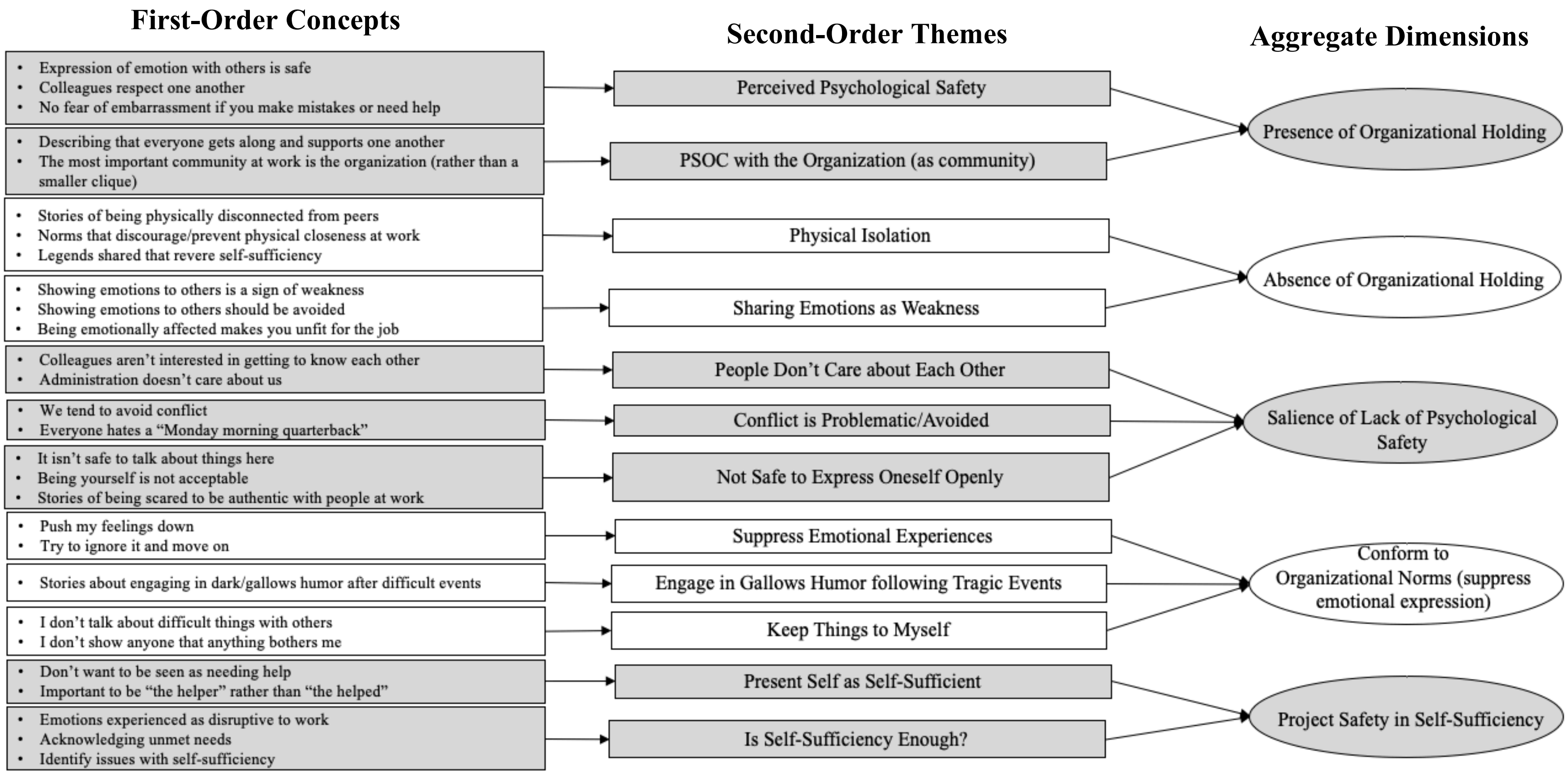
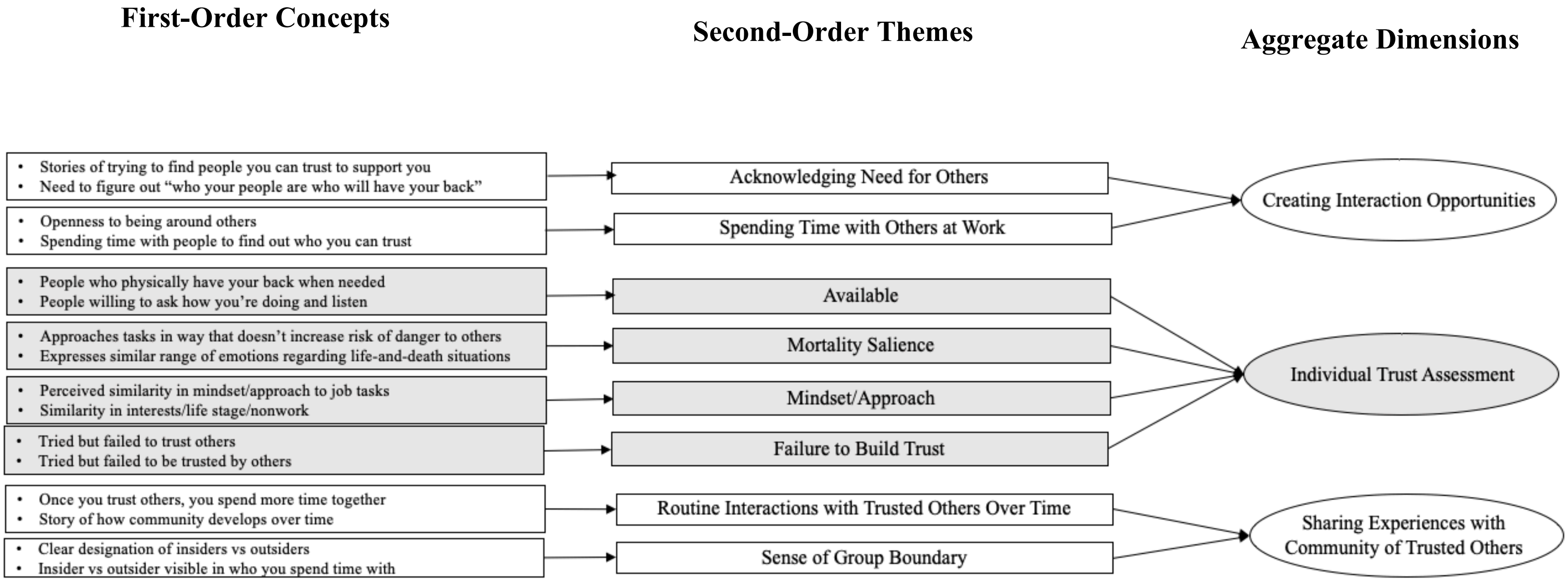

Outcomes of Relational Emotional Processing
Enactment of Relational Emotional Processing
1. Re-engaging traumatic event with others
2. Cognitive re-appraisal of the event
3. Social affirmation of emotional experience
Boundary Creation
• Time
• Space
• Social
Decreased emotional burden
Strengthened bond with trusted others
Increased social distance with outsiders
Reinforce and strengthen boundaries

Figure 3.1: Study 2 Data Structure *(continued on next two pages)*


First-Order Concepts
Second-Order Themes
Aggregate Dimensions
• Expression of emotion with others is safe
• Colleagues respect one another
• No fear of embarrassment if you make mistakes or need help
Perceived Psychological Safety
• Describing that everyone gets along and supports one another
• The most important community at work is the organization (rather than a smaller clique)
PSOC with the Organization (as community)
Presence of Organizational Holding
• Stories of being physically disconnected from peers
• Norms that discourage/prevent physical closeness at work
• Legends shared that revere self-sufficiency
Physical Isolation
• Showing emotions to others is a sign of weakness
• Showing emotions to others should be avoided
• Being emotionally affected makes you unfit for the job
Sharing Emotions as Weakness
Absence of Organizational Holding
• Colleagues aren't interested in getting to know each other
• Administration doesn't care about us
People Don't Care about Each Other
• We tend to avoid conflict
• Everyone hates a "Monday morning quarterback"
Conflict is Problematic/Avoided
• It isn't safe to talk about things here
• Being yourself is not acceptable
• Stories of being scared to be authentic with people at work
Not Safe to Express Oneself Openly
Salience of Lack of Psychological Safety
• Push my feelings down
• Try to ignore it and move on
Suppress Emotional Experiences
• Stories about engaging in dark/gallows humor after difficult events
Engage in Gallows Humor following Tragic Events
• I don't talk about difficult things with others
• I don't show anyone that anything bothers me
Keep Things to Myself
Conform to Organizational Norms (suppress emotional expression)
• Don't want to be seen as needing help
• Important to be "the helper" rather than "the helped"
Present Self as Self-Sufficient
• Emotions experienced as disruptive to work
• Acknowledging unmet needs
• Identify issues with self-sufficiency
Is Self-Sufficiency Enough?
Project Safety in Self-Sufficiency


First-Order Concepts
Second-Order Themes
Aggregate Dimensions
Stories of trying to find people you can trust to support you
Need to figure out "who your people are who will have your back"
Openness to being around others
Spending time with people to find out who you can trust
People who physically have your back when needed
People willing to ask how you're doing and listen
Approaches tasks in way that doesn't increase risk of danger to others
Expresses similar range of emotions regarding life-and-death situations
Perceived similarity in mindset/approach to job tasks
Similarity in interests/life stage/nonwork
Tried but failed to trust others
Tried but failed to be trusted by others
Once you trust others, you spend more time together
Story of how community develops over time
Clear designation of insiders vs outsiders
Insider vs outsider visible in who you spend time with
Acknowledging Need for Others
Spending Time with Others at Work
Available
Mortality Salience
Mindset/Approach
Failure to Build Trust
Routine Interactions with Trusted Others Over Time
Sense of Group Boundary
Creating Interaction Opportunities
Individual Trust Assessment
Sharing Experiences with Community of Trusted Others

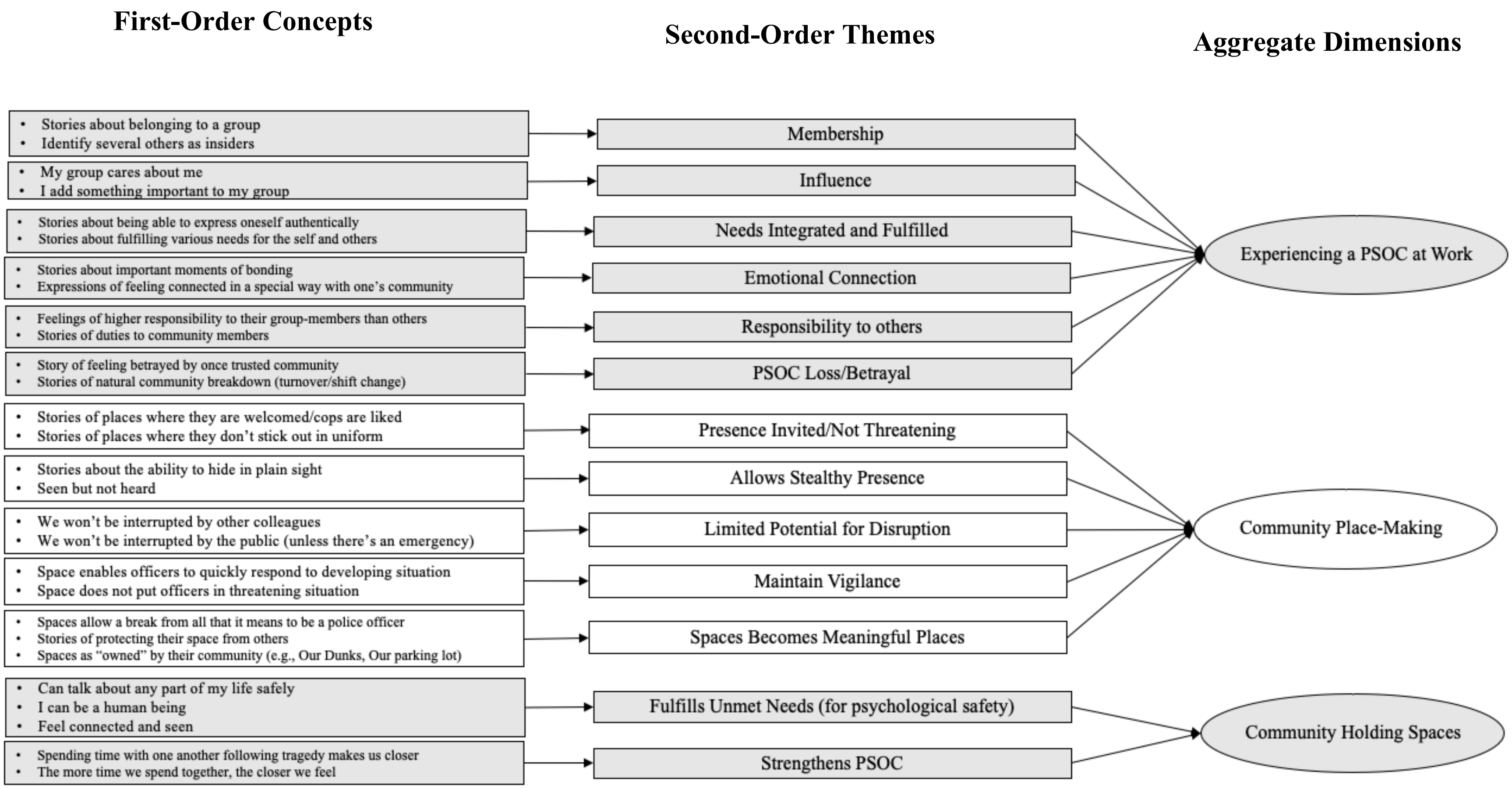
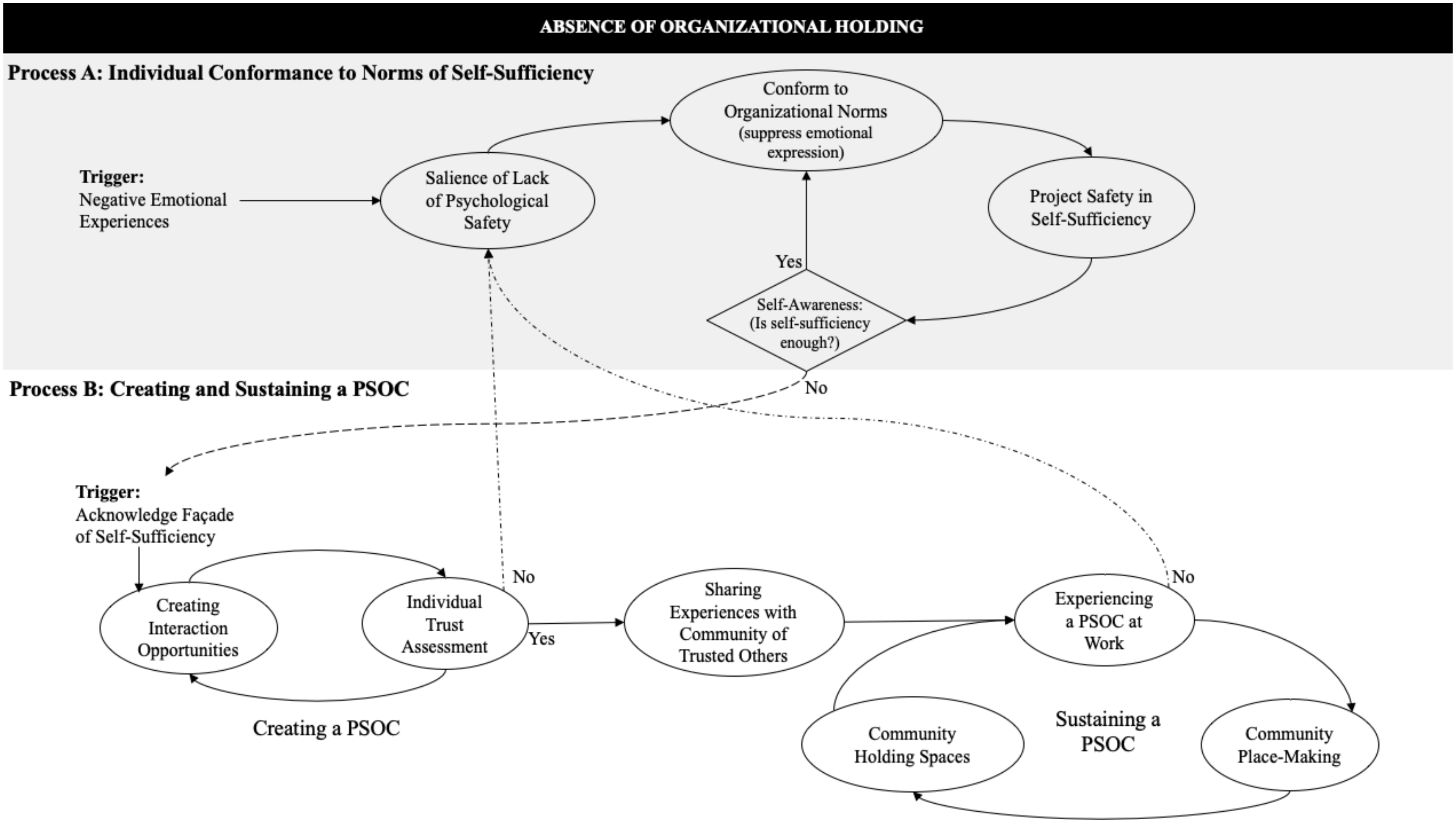

First-Order Concepts
Second-Order Themes
Aggregate Dimensions
• Stories about belonging to a group
• Identify several others as insiders
Membership
• My group cares about me
• I add something important to my group
Influence
• Stories about being able to express oneself authentically
• Stories about fulfilling various needs for the self and others
Needs Integrated and Fulfilled
• Stories about important moments of bonding
• Expressions of feeling connected in a special way with one's community
Emotional Connection
• Feelings of higher responsibility to their group-members than others
• Stories of duties to community members
Responsibility to others
• Story of feeling betrayed by once trusted community
• Stories of natural community breakdown (turnover/shift change)
PSOC Loss/Betrayal
Experiencing a PSOC at Work
• Stories of places where they are welcomed/cops are liked
• Stories of places where they don't stick out in uniform
Presence Invited/Not Threatening
• Stories about the ability to hide in plain sight
• Seen but not heard
Allows Stealthy Presence
• We won't be interrupted by other colleagues
• We won't be interrupted by the public (unless there's an emergency)
Limited Potential for Disruption
• Space enables officers to quickly respond to developing situation
• Space does not put officers in threatening situation
Maintain Vigilance
• Spaces allow a break from all that it means to be a police officer
• Stories of protecting their space from others
• Spaces as "owned" by their community (e.g., Our Dunks, Our parking lot)
Spaces Becomes Meaningful Places
Community Place-Making
• Can talk about any part of my life safely
• I can be a human being
• Feel connected and seen
Fulfills Unmet Needs (for psychological safety)
• Spending time with one another following tragedy makes us closer
• The more time we spend together, the closer we feel
Strengthens PSOC
Community Holding Spaces

Figure 3.2: Study 2 Process Model A & B



ABSENCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL HOLDING
Process A: Individual Conformance to Norms of Self-Sufficiency
Trigger: Negative Emotional Experiences
Salience of Lack of Psychological Safety
Conform to Organizational Norms (suppress emotional expression)
Project Safety in Self-Sufficiency
Self-Awareness: (Is self-sufficiency enough?)
Yes
No
Process B: Creating and Sustaining a PSOC
Trigger: Acknowledge Façade of Self-Sufficiency
Creating Interaction Opportunities
Individual Trust Assessment
No
Yes
Creating a PSOC
Sharing Experiences with Community of Trusted Others
Experiencing a PSOC at Work
No
Community Holding Spaces
Sustaining a PSOC
Community Place-Making

APPENDIX

Appendix I: Semi-structured interview protocol for Study 1

1. (General Background) I'd like to start by learning a little about yourself and your experience with this department:
   - How long have you been here?
   - What did you do before you joined this department?
   - Why did you decide to work here?
   - Why did you decide to be a cop?
   - Do you have police in the family?
   - What do you like about the job?
   - What do you dislike about the job?
   - What is life like here at this department?
   - How does this compare to other places you've worked?
   - What's the hardest part of the job?

2. (Building to emotions) I'm wondering about the kinds of people who work here.
   - What makes an ideal police officer here at this Department? Is that being a good cop, or just about being a good cop here? (People who excel here)

   - What about someone who you think is not an ideal. What makes someone not unfit for this job? (people who didn't make it here)

   - It sounds like police officers should be __________ (describe back to them what they explained makes a good officer)

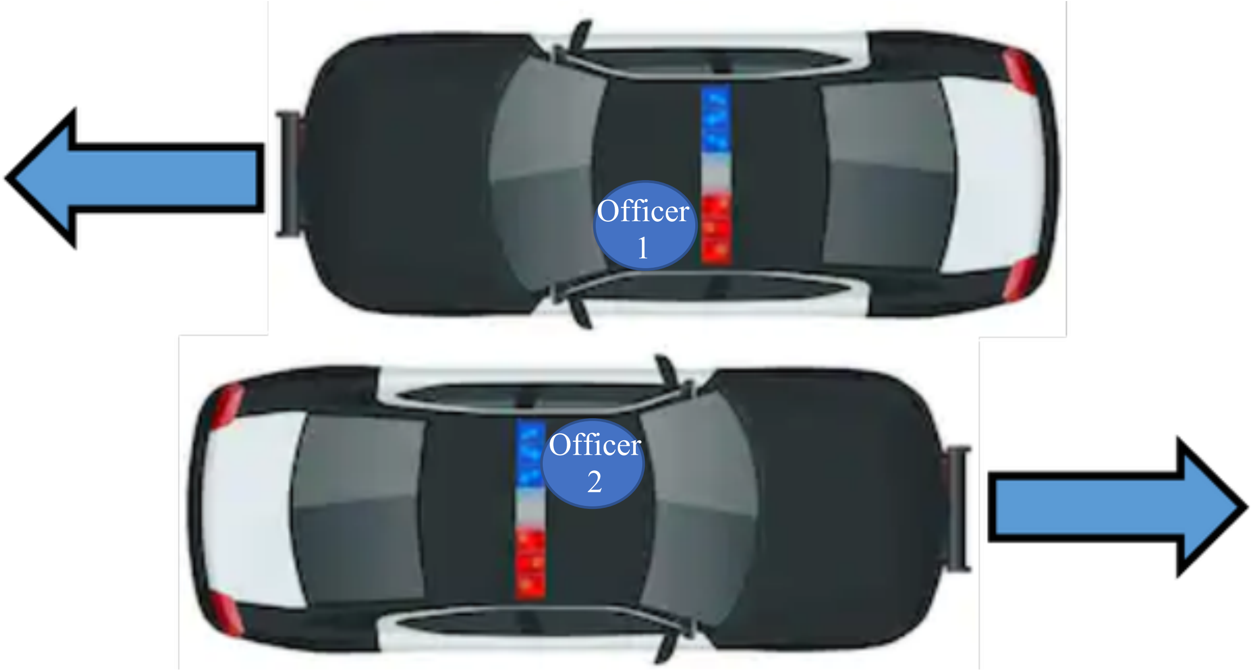
     - What about the kinds of emotions cops show each other (gauge whether emotion is an OK word to say in this setting)
     - Why those emotions?
     - Why not others?
     - What happens if someone shows ______ (something that they described isn't allowed)
     - I've been seeing a lot of anger – probe on what's going on with the anger
       - Do you see a lot of people getting angry here?
       - Why are people here so angry?
       - Is it ok to be angry?
       - Does anger help you do anything?
       - Does anger get in the way of anything?
       - Tell me about things that make you angry
       - Tell me about things that make other people angry
       - How do you know other people are angry?
       - Is it ok to be sad?

        - Does sadness help you do your job?
        - Does sadness get in the way of you doing your job?
        - Is it ok to be happy?
        - Is it ok to want to talk about these kinds of things?
        - Ask about a specific recent event that I would expect to see sadness but instead saw anger. Ask what was going on there – why anger?
    - Is it ever NOT ok to be angry?
    - Is it ever OK to be sad?

3. (Compassion/Support?) It sounds like this job can be challenging. Like it can really get to you sometimes. When you think of a really difficult experience here, what are some of the really difficult ones? (Some of the things that are really hard for you…)

    - Probe about what is hard; what makes it hard; is that same thing hard for others at work
    - You said this…is that a norm around here? Is that a general rule?
    - Probe about emotional experiences; challenges others face at work
    - When you notice the work "getting to someone" what's that like? What do you do?
    - Do you feel supported at work?
    - What about in the field – do you feel supported when you're in the field?
    - Tell me about your interactions with co-workers
        - How often do you ride with others? Why?
        - How do you choose?
        - When do you see others if you're riding alone?
        - Does it ever get lonely?
    - It sounds like as challenging as this work is, it can be hard to express that openly. Is that right? So what do you do with all of those feelings?
    - What's your outlet?

Appendix II: Depiction of a "Cruiser Cuddle"


Officer 1
Officer 2

Appendix III:
Semi-structured interview protocol for proposed Study 2

I. **INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS** [~5 minutes]

  a. Tell me a bit about your job.
    i. How long have you been with this department?
    ii. How large is your department?
  b. How did you decide to get into law enforcement?
    i. Are there any parts of the job that are different than you expected?
    ii. What about some of the hardest parts of this job?

II. **ESTABLISHING SENSE OF COMMUNITY** [~20 mins]

  a. What, if any, role do your coworkers play in a typical day for you?
  b. How often do you interact with your colleagues? Where and what are you doing when you see them?
    i. [Keep track of the times of the day when they interact with others and the categories of people and then probe on these]
    ii. [If they don't give a lot of details ask if they go to roll call, if they have meals with others/coffee, do they ever do cruiser cuddles, ride with partners]
    iii. Are there some people with whom you are particularly close? What are some of the characteristics of those whom you are closer to?
  c. Are there specific people from work you see or talk to outside of work? Tell me about this. [with probes as follows]
    i. How do you connect with them?
      1. Phone calls?
      2. Texts?
      3. Social media?
      4. Do you ever see them outside of work?
      5. Has this changed at all with COVID? If so, how?
  d. Do you feel you have a group of people that you feel a special bond with or connection to? Who are your people? [boundaries] [if answer no to groups but yes to individuals, ask pertinent questions from below about individuals that they are closer to]
    i. What are some of the things you do with "your people"?
      1. What are some of the things that are special about your group?
      2. What are some of the things you'd do with your people that you wouldn't do with others at work?
      3. Are there things you can talk about with your people that you couldn't with others at work? [emotional connections]
    ii. What do you contribute to the group? [influence & mattering]
    iii. What are some things this group provides for you? [fulfillment of needs]
    iv. Is there anything that you and the other members of the group expect of each other - formally or informally? [responsibility]
    v. What are the benefits to being part of this group?
    vi. Are there any downsides to being part of this group?

        vii. Has being in this group ever made things easier for you? If so, how?
        viii. Has being in this group ever made things more difficult for you?

III. **PROCESSING DIFFICULT EVENTS** [~20+ mins]

a. Thanks, that is all really helpful. If it's all right with you, what I'd like you to do is think of a time in your career in law enforcement when you had a particularly difficult event. [If they aren't sure what I mean by difficult: When I say difficult, I mean that you had strong feelings associated with the event – maybe you kept thinking about it for days or weeks after it happened – maybe it made you feel strong emotions – maybe it affected your sleep. Things like this].
b. I'd like you to tell me the story of this event – is that okay? Can you take me back to the beginning?...
    i. What happened?
    ii. Who was involved?
    iii. What made this a difficult event for you?
    iv. How were you feeling?
        1. Is that something you can openly express at work?
        2. How do you know?
        3. How are you supposed to feel about things like this?
    v. Did you talk about this with others at work? If so, who?
c. Thanks for sharing that. I appreciate you going into those details with me. If it is all right with you, I'd like to stay with this particular experience and ask you some more detailed questions about the days and weeks that followed it. Is this okay? What I want you to think about now in regards to that situation is how you dealt with it at work.
    i. Who if anyone did you talk to about this?
        1. When did you talk about it – how long after the event?
        2. What did you say?
        3. How did they react? What did they say?
        4. How did their reaction make you feel?
        5. Where were you when you talked about it?
            a. Did you plan to talk about it there?
            b. Are there places you wouldn't talk about it?
                i. Could you talk about this at roll call? If so, how?
                ii. What about other places? - probe for other places they might interact with others
            c. Do you go to this place often?
                i. If so, can you share some of the reasons you go this often? If not, can you share some of the reasons you go [this frequently – use informants' term]
                    1. People have mentioned that some places are safer than others - what does that mean?
                    2. Do you consider this place where you talked about it a safe place?
                ii. If you had to describe the personality of this place, what's it like?

                iii. Who else goes to this place?
                    1. And are these “your people” [insert their term if different] that you described earlier?
                iv. Generally, how do you feel when you’re here?
                v. Can you describe it to me - what’s this place like?
            6. How did you feel after talking about it here? [i.e., Did you feel better? Worse? About the same as before?]
        ii. [If they didn’t talk to anyone about it] Can you share a reason you chose not to talk about it with anyone?
            1. Can you think of any other difficult event that you did talk about with someone at work?
                a. Talking about this one makes it different than others that you didn’t talk about. Can you help me understand what made this one different from others?
        iii. Thinking back on this event, did others help you deal with this?
            1. Are these the same people you told me about that were “your people” [or insert whatever term they use]?
                a. Did you talk to “your people” about this?
                b. How if at all did they help you?
                c. And was this all happening at the place you described before?
    d. Thanks again for digging back into this story for me. How did you come to start talking about difficult events in this way?
        i. Have you always done it in this way?
        ii. Did they teach you anything about this in the academy?
        iii. What about in your formal training here? Are you expected to talk openly about these kind events here at work?
        iv. What about informally - how did you get the sense this was an okay way to talk about these things?
        v. Do you feel like your organization helps you deal with these difficult events? How so? If not, what specifically makes you feel this way?
        vi. Is there anything your organization could do differently that would be helpful?

IV. WRAP UP

    a. I’ve just about finished all my questions but I want to check and see if there is anything about how you talk to your colleagues about difficult events that we haven’t covered? Anything more about the places where you find it easier to talk about difficult events? Is there anything else I should know?
    b. Is there anything you thought I was going to ask, but didn’t?
    c. As you look back over all the experiences you have had, what has been the best part of your work and career for you?
    d. If you had one piece of advice for rookies coming into this job today about how to deal with difficult events in policing, what would it be?

Thank you. END.