



## Physical Anthropology Section - 2013

### 141 Use of Clinical Mental Health Professionals in Transition Adjustment Programs for OEF/OIF Veterans as New Police Officer Recruits

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The goals of this presentation are to: (1) provide a cognitive structure that explains how this kind of project is expected to contribute to the reframing and reorganization of police officer's ability to receive information relevant to stressful transition associated with the new civilian department; (2) communicate findings that will suggest important implications for mental health transition services specifically-related to Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) veterans; and, (3) create a foundation for additional research on this topic.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by describing the clinical mental health student component of a military-police cultural transition model being implemented in a large west coast police department.

There are potential negligent hire and retention risks associated with OEF/OIF veterans as new police officers. For some police departments, there has been tremendous growth (i.e., anywhere from 30 to 50 percent) in the proportion of these veterans moving into civilian police ranks. While their presence is welcomed, it has also focused increased attention on concerns about post-deployment Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI) and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). For example, PTSD has a predictable unwanted effect on the life course of veterans that is marked by both physical and psychological issues. A problem made worse by the presence of other psychological conditions that include the combined effects of dysphoria, as well as mTBI. Alcohol and other forms of substance abuse are also a part of the clinical picture of these veterans who are probably at a higher risk for premature departure from the military and quite vulnerable as new police recruits.

The OEF/OIF veteran clinical problems mentioned above are oftentimes inextricably linked to other sources of psychosocial stress. For example, financial pressures can occur from having psychological disorders like PTSD or other mood disorders. Most notably, they can create money-management problems, a situation made even worse if this OEF/OIF veteran had pre-existing problems managing their financial affairs. Pre-employment physicals and psychological screenings may not capture the full scope of the issues presented by these veterans. Fueled by budget cutbacks due to a declining economy, police departments are forging university partnerships with faculty that have experience in police psychology. Successful transition from the military to civilian life is important. Equally important are the transitions required from the military to police culture. The transitions from military to civilian life are exacerbated by the stress of trying to secure a job, family stress, and other financial pressures from a depressed economy. A new career as a police officer sounds like a relief, but may in many respects represent another stress on an OEF/OIF veteran who has already carried the burden of post-deployment stress. Moving from the stress from military service, to the stress of post-military life, and then into the stress from the police world which may further compromise an already distressed OEF/OIF veteran. Some departments are fully aware of these OEF/OIF issues and have implemented resources intentionally aimed at the issues that they present as new police recruits.

The first learning objective of this presentation is to explain a cognitively-oriented approach for this OEF/OIF veteran group. This approach explains how this kind of OEF/OIF veteran-police recruit project is expected to contribute to the reframing and reorganization of police officer's ability to receive information relevant to stressful transitions associated with the new civilian department. The second learning objective is to communicate findings that will suggest important implications for mental health transition services specifically-related to OEF/OIF veterans. The third objective is to create a foundation for additional research on this topic. This presentation describes the clinical mental health student component of a military-police cultural transition model being implemented in a large west coast police department. The community benefits by decisions made to create resources that support OEF/OIF involved in civilian public safety.

**OEF/OIF Veterans, Military Transition, Police Officer Recruits**