

Effects of Debriefing on Police Stress after a Crisis

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Project Scope:

Policing, by nature, is a stressful occupation. Responding to a crisis or disaster situation not only magnifies basic occupational stress, but will often result in post-traumatic stress for officers who serve as first responders to the event. Members of the New Orleans Police Department who worked at the time of the Hurricane Katrina crisis were surveyed and interviewed to determine their levels of stress after the storm and the nature of support they had received from the police department or government since the event. This project aims to establish the relationship between participation in formal debriefing and operational police stress in the New Orleans Police Department after Hurricane Katrina.

Recent Progress:

Self-administered surveys, yielding both quantitative and qualitative data, were distributed to and completed by New Orleans Police Department officers from the summer of 2007 to October of that year. Additionally, in December 2007 interviews with over 50 officers of various ranks were conducted in New Orleans to serve as qualitative data.

Future Plans:

The quantitative and qualitative data are currently being analyzed. While a review of related literature has been completed, more supplemental materials will be sought to answer questions that were presented in the study. Aside from answering the primary research question, it is also important to determine how the findings should contribute to catastrophic event response policies and practices for first responders.

Relevance to listed research areas:

This project is relevant to the research areas of Emergency Preparedness and Response and Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences as it closely follows the goals of preparedness studies; it aims in determining how to best prepare first responders involved in a crisis for future crisis situations, as well as how to best alleviate the effects of a disaster on first responders.

Publications:

There have been no publications since the beginning of the project.