

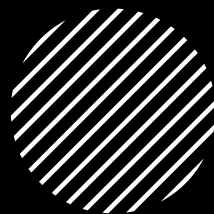
Job Stress Experienced
by Correctional
Officers in Hawai'i
Related to Working in a
Carceral Space

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Agenda



- Purpose of Study
- Researcher Positionality
- Introducing the Problem
- Method
- Results
- Conclusion
- Recommendations for Future Research





Purpose of Study

1. Examine the impact of regularly existing in a carceral space (i.e., jail or prison) on correctional officers (COs) in Hawai'i.
2. Highlight the need for evidence-based programming designed to prevent and treat job stress experienced by COs.

Researcher Positionality



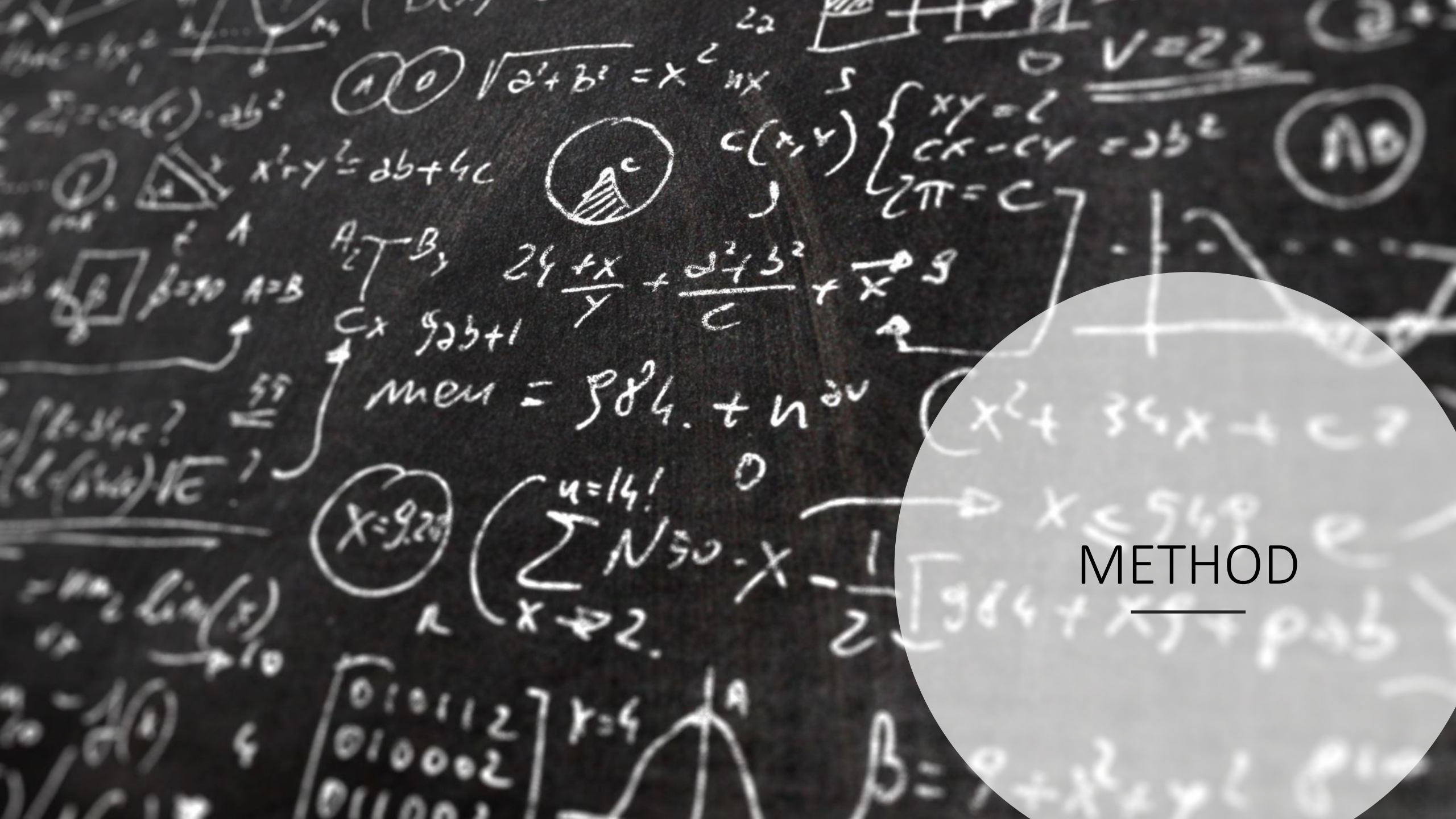
Kahlo, Frida (1939). The Two Fridas [Oil painting]

Introducing the Problem: Job Stress

- **Stress:** Relationship between person and environment where the environment is taxing/exceeding the person's resources or endangering the person's well-being (Carlson & Thomas, 2006).
 - Extreme and prolonged stress can negatively impact psychological and physical health (Health and Safety Executive, 2001; Cooper et al., 2001).
- **Job Stress:** An employee's feelings of job-related tension, anxiety, frustration, and distress that can lead to psychological and physical health problems (Cooper, Dewe, & O'Driscoll, 2001; Health and Safety Executive, 2001; Lambert, 2004; Thoits, 1995, 2010).
 - Johnson et al. (2005) found that one of the most psychologically and physically stressful occupations belonged to prison staff.

Introducing the
Problem:
**Job Stress
Experienced by
COs**

- **U.S. Department of Justice Programs Diagnostic Center Study found that COs:**
 - **Have higher rate of suicide than those in other occupations;**
 - **Experience some level of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) during their careers; and**
 - **Likely will not live to see their 59th birthday** (Brower, 2013).



(10)

$$\sqrt{a^2 + b^2} = x^2 \cdot x$$

$$x^2 + y^2 = ab + 4c$$



$c(x, y)$

$$\begin{cases} xy = -2 \\ cx - cy = 25^2 \\ 2\pi = c \end{cases}$$

$$v = 22$$

(10)

$A_2 T B$

$$24 + \frac{x}{y} + \frac{a^2 + b^2}{c} + \frac{1}{x}$$

$cx \cdot 9ab + 1$

$$men = 984 + n^{20}$$

$x = 9.22$

$$\sum_{x=2}^{n=14} N_{30} - x$$

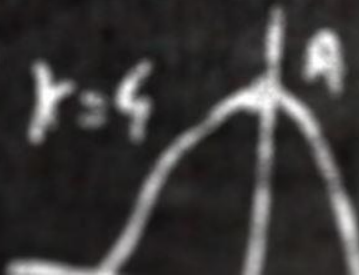
$$(x^2 + 34x + c)$$

$$x \leq 549$$

$$\frac{1}{2} [984 + x^2 + p + ab]$$

METHOD

010112
010002
011001



$$b = 9 + x^2 + y^2$$



Qualitative Research Questions

1. What is the nature of the relationship between COs and their carceral work environment?
2. How do COs cope with job stress?

Qualitative Interview Study

Participants & Recruitment

- Snowball sampling
- 20-30 participants
- COs formerly or currently employed at Oahu Community Correctional Center (OCCC)
- Age 21+

Measures

- Researcher background statement
- Consent form
- Interview guide
- Demographic form

Qualitative Interview Study

Procedures

Before interview:

- Contact referred participant to schedule interview.

At interview:

- Informed consent
- Semi-structured interview
- Demographic form
- Snowball sampling referral

Interviews

Participants:

- 20 COs formerly or currently employed at OCCC

Length of time employed at OCCC:

- Range: 3-31 years
- Average: 16.5 years
- Cumulative: 330 years

Interview setting:

- Starbucks or private location

Interview length:

- Range: 23 minutes – 2 hours
- Average: 1 hour

Qualitative Interview Study

Phenomenological Data Analysis

1

Highlight 'significant statements' (Creswell, 2013)

2

Identify 'clusters of meaning' to develop into themes (Creswell, 2013)

3

Write-up 'textural description' in context of 'structural description' (Creswell, 2013)

4

Write composite description of essence of phenomenon being explored (Creswell, 2013)

RESULTS



Results



Category I: Transitioning In and Out of the Carceral Work Environment

- Theme 1: Daily Routines for Going to Work
- Theme 2: Psychological Impact of Leaving Home/Going to Work
- Theme 3: Psychological Impact of Leaving Work/Arriving Home
- Theme 4: Daily Routines for Arriving Home

Category II: Interpersonal Relationships and the Carceral Work Environment

- Theme 5: Bringing the Job Home
- Theme 6: Withholding Information Related to Work from Partners
- Theme 7: Prevalence of Divorce Among COs

Category III: Health and Well-being in the Carceral Work Environment

- Theme 8: Hypervigilance
- Theme 9: Negative Health Consequences

Category IV: Access to Resources/Support through the Carceral Work Environment

- Theme 10: Lack of Resources/Support for Employees
- Theme 11: Need for Resources/Support for Employees

Category V: Sense of Support in the Carceral Work Environment

- Theme 12: Sense of Camaraderie
- Theme 13: Perceived Lack of Organizational Support

Category VI: Feelings About Oneself in the Carceral Work Environment

- Theme 14: Feeling Like a Different Person

Finding I: Participants Experienced OCCC as a Liminal Carceral Space

- **Theme 1: Daily routines for going to work**
 - Rest mind
 - Listen to music
 - Bathroom hygiene and caffeine
- **Theme 2: Psychological impact of leaving home/going to work**
 - Mentally prepare
 - Put on game face
 - Sense of dread
- **Theme 3: Psychological impact of leaving work/arriving home**
 - Happy/excited
 - Exhausted/relieved
- **Theme 4: Daily routines for arriving home**
 - Altering the physical body
 - Altering the physical space
 - Physical exercise

Put on game face:

I put on my game face. My game face look like I don't give a shit cuz in that position is a lot of stuff we deal with. You gotta remain calm. But I try tell myself, "Don't allow that to bother you." But it is. I'll be lying if it wasn't. So, that's a lot here, and yes, it's beyond my control. I can't help it, but it's frustrating.

Sense of dread:

This place for me, I get - I just feel it's not one good place, and everything over here, I've always heard that saying, 'It's like the cesspool of humanity or something.' And that's how I feel. When I come to work, it's like doom and gloom.

Finding II: Participants Interpersonal Relationships Outside of OCCC Suffered

- **Theme 5: Bringing the job home**
 - Talking to family like inmates
 - Short-tempered
- **Theme 6: Withholding information related to work from partners**
 - Feeling that partners wouldn't understand
 - Shielding partners from upsetting details
- **Theme 7: Prevalence of divorce among COs**
 - Going into corrections after marriage
 - Communication issues

Talking to family like inmates:

*My wife, she says ever since I started, I've been a little bit edgy here and there on certain things. I say, "Yea, I guess." **Before, I used to be this quiet person, just no bother, but now certain things tick me off.** She notice that. She looks at me, "What's wrong with you? How come you act like that?" I say, "I don't know." **She goes, "You cannot do that. You cannot talk like that to your kid. That's not one inmate!"** I catch myself, but my wife always catches me on my stress and all that. I get defensive at first, "That's not because of the job or this and that." Next time, **when I sit down, I start thinking over these past couple years. Yea, I've been kind of different ever since I started.***

Short-tempered:

*Lotta COs' wives knows exactly what happens and how you feel, and like my wife understands, **I turn it off, turn it on,** and she understands the way I am here. **Sometimes it comes out. The joke: "The CO comes out. The CO's words come out."** If I don't swear - I try not to swear around my kids – and then you come here and every word is "fuck, you fakah, bullshit," and then **you have to learn how to talk here;** talk at work. **I try not to talk like that around my kids. Even though that's the way of the world, that's not the way they should hear the world.***

Feeling that partners wouldn't understand:

*"You not gon' know what I went through unless you in there. **You not gon' know how I feel unless you been in the situation we've been in.**"*

*"She doesn't really understand it. **She doesn't understand the violent mentality** – the violence: **'Somebody went to the ER today with a broken jaw and fractured eye socket.'**"*

Shielding partners from upsetting details:

*Sometimes. **I don't tell her everything. Like I've never told her about when I was over there tryna save the guy's life that tried to hang himself.** I don't wanna give the extreme stuff – the most extreme stuff. But I'll tell 'em about the guy that sat on the toilet and he so skinny he fell in the toilet. You know, I tell 'em those kind stories. **I don't like to freak her out, you know? Don't want her to think about the stuff I go through.***

Finding III: Participants Attributed Declining Health and Well-being to Job Stress

- **Theme 8: Hypervigilance**
 - Eyes darting around
 - Needing a visual of the exit
 - Avoiding crowds
- **Theme 9: Negative health consequences**
 - High blood pressure
 - Stroke and heart attack
 - Increased substance use
 - Generally poor health

Eyes darting around:

I still do all these things. I keep my back to the wall. I watch everybody. I've been gone four years now, and I still evaluate everyone walking past me. I always watch people's hands. Trust nobody. It's a shame, but it's a product of the environment. You know, it's a very toxic environment, and like I said, to this day, I'm still like that. I still trust nobody. I'm always watching people's hands. I trust nobody. I see people walking. I'm always evaluating everybody, and it's weird and even older people are walking by me; I'm evaluating, watching their hands.

Needing a visual of the exit:

*I guess, if anything, it just raised my awareness. Security-minded, you know? Whenever I go out – **I won't go out to a restaurant, to the mall, in slippers. Basically, if the shit hits the fan, you gotta be able to run to or run away from whatever that is.** So, if you're wearing slippers, you're gonna cut up your feet. It's one of the little things I do regularly. **How many times you seen these mass shootings where people are wearing the wrong shoe wear? They just can't run from someone else cuz their shoes.***

Avoiding crowds:

I'm not like how I was. I don't like to go to public places.** I don't like to go to football games at UH, at the Aloha Stadium, and I don't like that, and **it's not because I don't like them.** It's not because I don't like to hang out. It's not because I don't drink. I like football. **I get paranoid in places like that.** I learn to just watch everybody, and people's faces look familiar when I walk around, and it is what it is. It's an island – can't get away. **It stresses me out. I don't go public places – pretty much stay at home, dive, and work out.

Increased substance use:

*Eh - me and tequila got along really well. Scotch – we got along really well. Unfortunately, too well. I am an alcoholic. I haven't had a drink in many years. **And that's the way I dealt with it, and I drank all the time. I would drink to excess.** It got to the point; literally, you know these little half-gallon containers? I would make Crystal Lite iced tea in it and add the tequila. That's how I would drink. I was on the Board of Directors in my housing area, and I'd go to meetings with that. By the end of the meeting, I was pretty buss'. **But yea, me and alcohol got along too well, and that's how I dealt with it. But, the Hepatitis was a backhanded godsent, you know? I stopped drinking.***

Generally poor health:

*A lot of people go get sick just before retirement – many, many. Many will die, or they die soon after. **Probably just maybe stress. Maybe the body so used to it, and once you don't have it anymore, doesn't know how to cope with it and shuts down.***

I only know two COs that lived longer than ten years after retirement.

Finding IV: Participants Wanted Non-judgmental Access to Resources/Support

- **Theme 10: Lack of resources/support for employees at OCCC**
 - Available resources/support
 - No available resources/support
 - Previously available resources/support
 - Lack of debriefing
 - Employees supporting each other
- **Theme 11: Need for resources/support for employees**
 - Someone to talk to
 - Resources/support should not just be for inmates
 - Culture of corrections as a barrier

Previously available resources/support:

*I mean, at the job, only when something extreme happened, they used to bring us to the Module 9 area, and we used to sit down. The nurses used to come. Even the therapist used to come. **We used to talk about what happened. Um, the guy hang himself and stuff like that - after the fact, we went over there and talk about it. Anybody need time, whatever.** So, I mean, basically went down to the people who was running the jail. They're honorable men. They took care of us with compassion. Not only for us, but they had the respect of even the inmates. **They used to have that. But now, they don't have that, especially after the shooting and stuff like that.** Yea, there was no de-stressing. Sad cuz we used to have that before. We did. That was like in - when I first came in 1997? Shoot, maybe til 2000 - the early 2000s? After that, it just faded away. **We don't even address it.***

Lack of debriefing:

*I wanted to share an example, and it's what's bothered me. **I know you probably heard about that shooting that killed that inmate a few months ago, and till this day, it's bothered me. I believe that we deserved a debriefing on the situation – the event.** I was almost working that day. But they ended up saying they didn't need me. So, I went home that day. But I can only imagine what everybody else went through and how they felt. I know how I felt. I seen it on social media. I just happened to be on Facebook and reading it. So, I know my heart stopped. I felt for the guy. I called to see if they needed me to come into work, and from that incident on, **there was no debriefing - there was nothing. There was nothing to tell us, "Okay, should this occur again, we have [an] available team."** Like in schools in crisis. Schools has counselors. Like there was no debriefing to say that if you need this, go here. Like we have psychologists on here, and there was just no communication whatsoever to kinda let us know that there are these people here to help us if we need and tell us, "Should this happen again, this is what we should go." Cuz at that point, **I know a lot of people were kinda like didn't know how to handle the situation – what we should've done. So, they should've debriefed us. Let us know should this occur again; this is how we should handle it. We get nothing till this day from that situation. They no mo' talk about it. They refuse to talk about it.** Sorry, I'm getting emotional about this (wiping tears). You think about [CO shooter], and I know we've tried to reach out to him. He doesn't reach out to us. But, there's someone that talked to him, and they always tell us, say, "He's not well. He's not in a good place."*

Resources/support should not just be for inmates:

When I first seen somebody hang themselves and die – there's more stuff for the inmates when something drastic happens. Let's say the inmate sees the guy hanging in his cell. The CO responds. We have to cut the guys down. We have to do first-aid. We're doing compressions, so we get hands-on. The inmate just seen the guy hanging. They talk to the inmate more cuz they're more concerned about his well-being than the actual CO that has to deal with actually attempting or trying to save this guy's life. The CO has to stay there for so long and do chest compressions, and the guy dies. The inmate seen it, and you feel sorry. That's his roommate, and the CO attempted and failed. How does that make him feel that he had to bring him down and do all that stuff, and you work there and see the guy every day? You feel for the guy too, but there's "Oh poor inmate. Just make your report, and you're good."

Culture of corrections as a barrier:

Especially this environment is very masculine, so there is just - the norms are different in this place. So, in my last job, we had an employee assistance program, so we knew if ever we felt suicidal, if we had issues, that information - the resources were available to us. So, we knew where to locate it. But, jail corrections is such a different society. What's normal outside of jail walls is not the norm in here. It's a very masculine environment. Even what I'm doing now, even with the little emotion I'm showing you now, it's like no one wants to show that. But everyone knows who I am. I'm an emotional person, and it's who I am, and it doesn't bother me that people see me. But, for a lot of these guys, it is a problem for them. They hide it.

Finding V: Participants Stressed the Importance of Sense of Support at OCCC

- **Theme 12: Sense of camaraderie**
 - Good people
 - Socializing
 - Support
- **Theme 13: Perceived lack of organizational support**
 - Feeling unsupported
 - Feeling unvalued
 - Feeling uncared for

Support (from co-workers):

We are our own support group. Regardless of what we personally feel about each other, we do draw solace from each other in the fact that we shared experiences. In some ways, combat veterans. We have much more camaraderie than even the police officers in that we work more closely with each other as a group than police officers work as a group. That's very rewarding.

The camaraderie. The people at OCCC I would give my life for, to this day, and I'm sure they would for me. One of the best compliments I've ever received – [CO] said, "You know, there is not a door I would not go through with you." That's the best compliment I think I've ever gotten cuz I'd rather get that compliment from someone that I'm working with than somebody up here that's never worked with me, and he gave me that compliment.

Feeling unvalued (by OCCC admin and PSD):

“Not sure. Nobody tell us good or bad what we do.”

“They don’t give a shit, really.”

“I don’t even think they know who I am.”

“I don’t know if they value anybody’s contribution.”

“We work for a non-caring master.”

“What I think – you’re disposable. You can be replaced.”

“I feel like they’re sucking me for everything I got, and then when I’m done, they’re just throwing me to the fire.”

Wishing things were different:

*I used to work warehouses and enjoyed my job back then, but they said this was the one. They said it's a good-paying job and it's steady. So, I said, "Okay, I go try 'um." When I finally did 'um, and I finally came, and after the first year, I was like, "Oh, I should have come a long time ago." **After going into the second year, I started seeing this job for not what I thought it would be,** and I was surprised I stayed here this long – thirteen years and change. That's the longest job I ever been at. **Every time I get this feeling that that's it for me, and I don't know: It's like I like do something else. Something that gon' make me happy.** I look at life and you happy with your job no matter the pay. You go to work. You no work no single day you no like. **But if you not happy with your job, you gon' feel like one slave, and that's how I feel. I told, 'um, I feel like that over here. I no even really like this job.***

Conclusion



WE ARE ALL IN THE SAME STORM
BUT NOT THE SAME BOAT

Thank you!

Questions/
Comments?

