

# THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL PSYCHOLOGY OF POLICE STOPPING AN ACTIVE SHOOTER

**Rodger E Broome**

Utah Valley University, USA

The purpose of this single instance phenomenological psychological study was to explore what it is like for a police officer to use deadly force to stop an active shooter in an urban city of the Western US. While many police officers responded to the report of an active shooter at an urban shopping center, the participant in this study located, shot, and killed the perpetrator. The 15 constituents discovered in this study that constituted the lived-experience were, (a) self-in-squad identification, (b) alert to dangerous situation, (c) desire to cooperate with other police officers, (d) gather information about situation, (e) dynamically-aggressive response, (f) drawing from the past for understanding, (g) anxiety provoked by ambiguities, (h) equipment integrity management, (i) existential danger signs, (j) surreal phenomenal anomalies, (k) volitional fiat to shoot, (l) perceptions of wounding the assailant, (m) duty fulfillment, (n) realization of the catastrophic destruction, (o) caring compassion for victims and (p) connection with home. The experience unfolded for the officer in a way that objectively seems to be "textbook" for this incident. Nevertheless, there are experienced paradoxical aspects that emerge and create dissonance for the participant. These paradoxes are felt conflicts between values the officer holds both personally and professionally. Police officers, police trainers, law enforcement leadership, and police psychologists may all draw insights from this study's findings to better perform their professional functions. A significant limitation to this study is that it only involves one officer's account of his experience. Future studies are needed to extend the subject matter of this inquiry. Nevertheless, the account and analysis of this study provide extremely important information about what it is like to use deadly force as a police officer to stop an active shooter.

broomero@uvu.edu