


2016

# Emergency Responder Causal Reasoning Impact

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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2016

Abstract

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by

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MS, Long Island University, 2012

BA, Long Island University, 2011

AS, Nassau Community College, 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

November, 2016

## Abstract

This ethnographic and phenomenological study examined the relationship between the benefits and compensation afforded to emergency responders; their perceptions of work equity, equality, justice, and risk management; and the effect of perceived equity, equality, justice, and risk management on the execution of an emergency responder's duties. The data was collected through interviews with members of the culture group, including law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical responders (n = 24). The interviews were audio recorded, then manually transcribed by the researcher. The raw data was coded for reoccurring themes and commonalities. The reoccurring themes were organized and displayed in tables based on subcategory of the culture group. The results of the study indicate that the benefits and compensation afforded to professionals working in this field have an impact on their perception of work equity, justice, and risk management. It was further found that these benefits do not have an impact on the perception of work equality among members of this culture group. Understanding how to effectively motivate these professionals can have many positive effects regarding social change. These effects could be seen at the local and individual level for these responders, at the community level for those that they serve, and at the policy level.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Resources are an essential component of production necessary for organizations to survive. Among critical resources are human resources. Motivated and capable human resources are essential for organizations. These resources are especially important within the emergency services. Law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians provide a critical service to every community. Without these dedicated professionals the sustainability of societies could be questioned. However, it is essential that these professionals execute their duties in the most highly motivated and proactive manner possible. There is a current deficit of information regarding the motivating factors behind the behavior of these professionals.

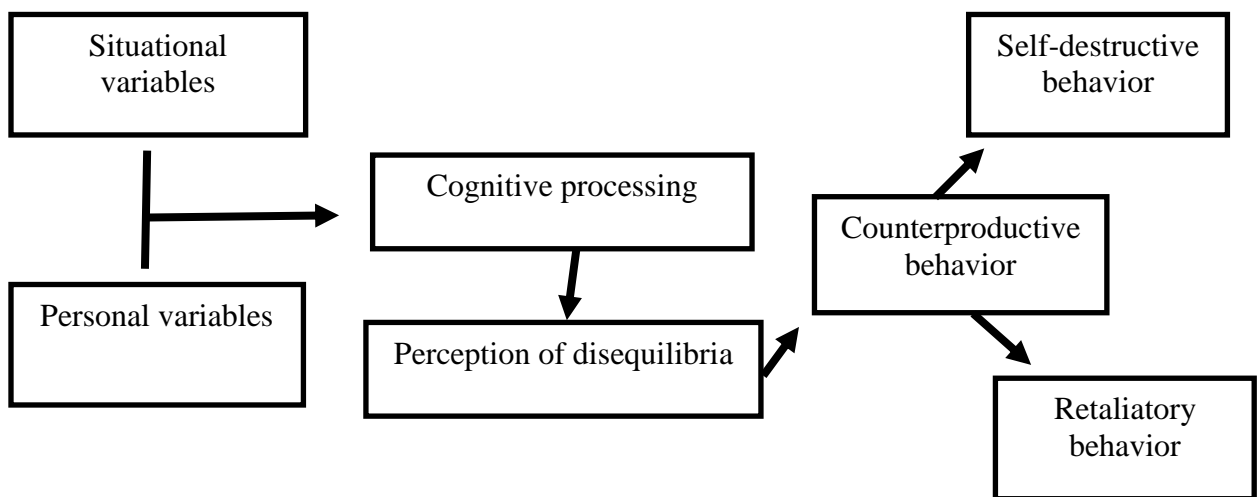
### **Background of the Study**

Often within a community, members assume that when an emergency occurs or a disaster strikes, help will come immediately. Along with this expectation is the assumption that the professionals who arrive will angelically execute their essential duties, and render aid to those in need. The fact that emergency responders have human constraints is often overlooked or disregarded. These individuals have the same human flaws and needs as everyone else within the community to which they also belong. Although the individuals are professionals working in unique environments, the emergency services are still an occupation.

The perceptions of work equity, organizational justice, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment are essential to maintain a properly motivated workforce. A properly motivated workforce is necessary to ensure a proactive approach to the

execution of essential duties, rather than a more passive performance of essential duties. Emergency responders are required to respond to emergencies and based on their experience, professional judgment, and training, take action to stabilize an unstable and often ultra-hazardous environment. Although this requirement is set forth on these individuals, they do have a high level of discretion.

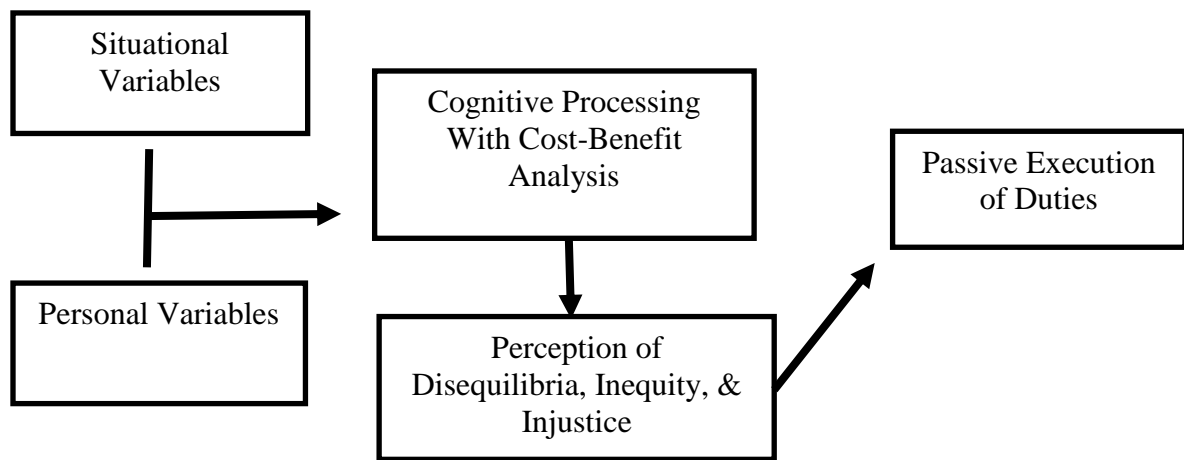
Martinko, Gundlach, and Douglas (2002) developed the causal reasoning model of counterproductive workplace behavior. This model can be used to explain how certain variables affect the process by which a person uses his or her cognitive processing to develop a perception of equity and justice. This process can be continued and be used to explain how and why one person may execute certain duties more proactively than others. This model is depicted in figure 1.



*Figure 1: Causal reasoning model of counterproductive behavior (Martinko, Gunlach, and Douglas, 2002)*

The causal reasoning model of counterproductive behavior needed to be rebuilt to fit the design of this particular study. In the original form situational variables merge with

personal variables within a person's cognitive processing. If the cognitive processing leads to a perception of disequilibria, then counterproductive behavior will result, leading to either self-destructive behavior or retaliatory behavior. Under the adjusted model, the perception is tweaked to fit the needs of the given culture group under study. If the person's cognitive processing develops a perception of disequilibria, inequity, and injustice, then it will result in a passive execution of duties rather than a more proactive approach.



*Figure 2: Causal reasoning model of counterproductive behavior for this study*

Under this model, personal variables were viewed as personal assets and liabilities of the individual emergency responders. Examples include family, debt, mortgages, health, marketability, level of education, and student loans. Situational variables are those related to their employment as an emergency responder. These variables include factors such as perceived danger, exposure to hazards, conflicts, health benefits, salary, schedule, time off, disability benefits, and death benefits. All of these factors affect the cognitive perception of equity, equilibria and justice for each individual emergency responder. For

example, under this model a firefighter with substantial personal liabilities, such as a mortgage and children who is not provided with adequate situational assets such as high-quality disability and death benefits and who is regularly exposed to high levels of occupational hazards, should develop a perception of disequilibria, inequity, and injustice. They are then more likely to engage in a more passive execution of their duties.

This concept is supported by past research. Caillier (2013) found a significant connection between the benefits provided by their employer and the job commitment of federal employees. Similar to Caillier's results, Jo and Shim (2015) found that work-related variables have a significant relationship with work satisfaction among a subgroup of emergency responders. Research conducted by Olapedgba and Onuoha (2013), Swimberghe, Jones, and Darrat (2014), Piccoli and De Witte (2015), and Nisir and Bashir (2012) has created an understanding of either the causes of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, or organizational justice; or examined the challenges associated with work in the emergency services on human motivation and behavior, however none have yet put these variables together in a study.

### **Problem Statement**

Every community within the nation is dependent on their local emergency responders. These professionals put their wellbeing at risk on a daily basis for the betterment of society. These occupations are associated with high levels of physical danger, tremendous stress, and other occupational hazards above and beyond the average worker (Violanti et al., 2012). Even with these risks, it is essential that these professionals perform their duties to the highest standard and act proactively. Under the causal reasoning model of counterproductive work behavior set forth by Martinko et al. (2002),



two types of variables affect a person's cognitive processing. This processing can create a perception of disequilibria, inequity, and injustice leading to a less than proactive approach to their work function.

Through time, many municipalities have reduced the benefits afforded to emergency responders, which fits into the situational variable category of the causal reasoning model of counterproductive work behavior (New York City Police Pension Fund, 2015). The problem that currently exists, which I explored in this study, is that a perception of disequilibria, inequity, and injustice stemming from the quality and quantity of compensation and benefits provided to emergency responders may have an adverse effect on the execution of their duties. In this study, I viewed emergency responders as a single culture group because they share a standardized set of values, experiences, and uncommon situations (Johnson, 2015; Violanti et al., 2012).

I sought to connect the gap in the literature relating to the effects of benefits afforded to emergency responders on their developed perception through cognitive processing. In addition, I focused on the effect the impact of this processing on the execution of duties. The way in which the duties assigned to emergency responders are executed will ultimately have an effect on general public safety.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to gather data to develop a two-part increased understanding of the research problems. The first problem is the lack of information regarding the effect that the benefits and compensation being afforded to emergency responders has on their perception of their work equity and justice. The second problem that I explored is the lack of information regarding the effect that perception of work

equity and justice has on the execution of an emergency responder's essential duties, and on general public safety. This problem will be assessed through a qualitative research approach. The study subjects were emergency response professionals who are actively working in the field, or have recently left the field. An increased understanding of this problem can aid public policy administrators in effecting positive change in the field.

### **Research Questions**

1. Research Question (RQ) 1: What is the relationship between the benefits and compensation afforded to emergency responders, and their perception of work equity, equality, justice, and risk management?
2. RQ2: How does the perception of equity, equality, justice, and risk management affect the execution of an emergency responder's duties?

### **Conceptual Framework of the Study**

Human behavior, human motivation, and organizational policy were at the forefront of this study. The framework for this study was based on two theories. These theories were the human resource theory, specifically on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, as well as the resource dependence perspective. The hierarchy of needs theory explains the factors behind human behavior and motivation (Cao et al., 2013; Lester, 2013). The resource dependence perspective explains that the need for resources controls an organization's procedures and policies (Chisholm, Weech-Maldonado, Landry, & Epané, 2015).

The hierarchy of needs is a theory that breaks human needs into five categories, ordered by level of importance. The first category is composed of physiological needs,

such as the need to sleep and eat. If these needs are not met than any other needs are irrelevant (Lester, 2013). The next level of needs is safety and security, and then belongingness, esteem, and finally self-actualization (Cao et al., 2013). Maslow proposed that the greater the level of needs are satisfied, the stronger the psychological and physical health of the individual will be (Lester, 2013). Following this theory, a person's behavior should be predictable as they will act in a way which will most satisfy all of their needs (Thielke et al., 2012).

“Performance of behaviors aimed at satisfying the current relevant need will continue until that need is accomplished, at which point the next level is addressed. People shift back and forth between needs over time, depending on circumstances. Lower-order needs have a higher intrinsic relevance, and thus stronger short-term effects on behavior, than higher-level needs: people will more aggressively and consistently seek out food and shelter than opportunities to be creative” (Thielke et al., 2012, pp. 473-474).

This theory can be used to explain why individuals seek and maintain employment, how they motivate, and could dictate the manner in which they execute their duties.

Resource dependence theory is focused on the sustainability of organizations, setting forth the principle that every organization can determine its own level of sustainability (Chisholm et al., 2015). A major aspect of this theory is that organizations will have to negotiate exchanges with other organizations to secure needed resources (Chisholm et al., 2015). Under this theory organizations will be motivated to acquire sufficient resources to ensure long-term sustainability, and independence (Chisholm et

al., 2015). For example, a city will require human resources to staff their police departments and fire departments; therefore, they negotiate an exchange of resources with the police and fire labor unions. Additionally, individual emergency responders require resources such as monetary income and health benefits; therefore, they negotiate an exchange with the city. Following this theory, each party will attempt to obtain the greatest resources from the other to ensure their personal sustainability and lessen their dependence on the other.

### **Nature of the Study**

This study was a qualitative study. Qualitative studies are associated with a deeper and more in-depth view of a phenomenon (Gill, 2014). The design is a blend of ethnography and phenomenology. Ethnography views a phenomenon through the lens of a specific culture group (Gill, 2014). Phenomenology studies a phenomenon through those who have lived it, with a focus on their individual experiences (Gill, 2014).

Phenomenology and ethnography were blended in this study because combining these two methodologies best answered the two research questions. The research questions were centered on a specific culture group. I sought to develop an understanding of how members of this culture group develop perceptions, and the effect on their behaviors. The study data were obtained phenomenologically through the lived experiences of those in the culture group; specifically through interviewing emergency responders regarding their perception of work equity and justice, and how they believed it affected the way in which they executed their duties.

## **Definitions**

*Burnout:* A condition that occurs when an individual has exhausted all of their emotional, social, cognitive, and sometimes physical resources as a result of work-related stress and conditions (McCarty & Skogan, 2012).

*Counterproductive work behavior:* Behavior conducted on the part of an employee that is detrimental to an organization's operations. Generally behavior which is either self-destructive or retaliatory in nature. In the case of the study with regard to emergency responders counterproductive work behavior will have a greater focus on a passive execution of required duties as opposed to a more proactive approach.

*Emergency responder:* Law enforcement officer, firefighter, or emergency medical technician. Those working in the emergency response field.

*Organizational justice:* The perception of fair and equitable treatment (Beauregard, 2014).

*Work equity:* The perceived concept of benefiting from working. The development of fair net proceeds after expenses based on the level of work and risk sustained (Piccoli & De Witte, 2015). Often the perception of work equity will be hindered when there is substantial risk of injury or fatality (McCaughey, McGhan, Walsh, Rathert, & Belue, 2014). A person may lose income from their secondary employment, or be unable to afford assets if they face high levels of danger without proper assurances.

*Work-family conflict:* Work-family conflict (WFC) is defined as pressures, which occur from the opposing roles in which an individual must maintain as both a member of their own family and as a member of the workforce (Zhao & Ghiselli, 2016). These roles can create conflict that can lead to a spillover of obligations, emotions, attitudes, as well as perceived and actual pressures (Swimberghe et al., 2014).

### **Assumptions**

The primary assumption made during the course of this study was that the members of the sample population who were knowingly and voluntarily participate were open and honest. The research sample population was asked several open-ended questions which were designed to stimulate in-depth responses. It was assumed that the responses would actually be in-depth and information rich. It was also assumed that these responses are true. To mitigate against the possibility that a misconception is drawn from the data participants were allowed to member check the information which was drawn from the raw data.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The focus was on the perception developed by individual members of this particular culture group. I measured perception based on the experiences of individuals within this culture group. I did not measure or assess anything physically tangible. Additionally, the culture group under study was composed of tens of thousands of individuals; I utilized a sampling which has a degree of generalizability, however, will not generate the transferability that a quantitative study would generate. The targeted

sample population was to be composed of 30 emergency responders, 10 law enforcement officers, 10 firefighters, and 10 emergency medical technicians.

### **Limitations**

I used a sample size large enough to be significant and generate a degree of transferability, however will still be limited as the overall population of emergency responders would be impossible to interview. I sought to assess the perception of members of this culture group. Issues of dependability may arise as perception may differ by individual, and perceptions can evolve over time as experiences enhance. These issues were mitigated through the use of a sizeable qualitative study sample population. Issues of bias can arise as I am a member of the culture group under study. The issue of bias was mitigated through the use of member checking.

### **Significance**

Public safety is of the utmost concern to public policy officials. With this understanding must come the further understanding that the current fiscal and political climate is always evolving. It is certain that this evolution has an effect on the individuals who ensure public safety. However, there is a current deficit of information regarding the effects of such. New York City, the city with the largest police department in the world, and the most reendowed fire department in the world can be used to exemplify the need for this missing information.

The City of New York is the largest employer within its confines. It is composed of more than 8,000,000 residents, employing 337,667 individuals belonging to 144 labor unions (New York City Office of Labor Relations [NYC OLR], 2015). The City's annual

operating budget is more than \$72,000,000,000, over half of which is designed for personnel costs including wages and benefit packages (Citizens Budget Commission [CBC], 2015). Nearly all of these employees belong to labor unions; the labor “unions negotiate multi-year contracts with the city that provide salary increases and specify terms of employment. As of July 2012, all labor contracts have expired; some expired as long ago as 2009” (CBC, 2015, p. 2). According to a report issued by NYC OLR in September 2015, a total of 83% of city employees settled a contract. The remaining 57,477 employees continue to work out of contract, some going over half a decade without a salary increase or change in benefits (NYC OLR, 2015).

The majority of those who were unable to negotiate a fair and agreeable contract with the city are those working in the emergency services. The labor unions out of contract include the Uniformed Firefighters Association, the Patrolman’s Benevolent Association (representing police officers), the Corrections Officer’s Benevolent Association, L2507/L3621 (representing emergency medical service providers), CWA L1182 (representing traffic enforcement agents), LEEBA (representing environmental police officers), the NYC Deputy Sheriffs’ Association (representing deputy sheriffs and supervisors), detective investigators working for the prosecutor’s office, and emergency medical service chiefs (NYC OLR, 2015). Emergency service professionals account for approximately 20% of the city’s workforce. As of September 2015, only 25% of those were working without an expired contract, all of whom operate in a supervisory capacity (NYC OLR, 2015). The emergency service labor unions which have negotiated a deal with the city include the police Sergeants Benevolent Association, and the USOC



(representing police captains, police lieutenants, detectives, fire officers, correction captains, and assistant deputy wardens).

The impasse between the city and these labor unions has led to tremendous public outcry and animosity between the city and emergency responders. The New York City Patrolman's Benevolent Association (PBA) has maintained a propaganda agenda against the city throughout 2014, 2015, and 2016. The PBA is responsible for:

“full page ads appearing in major daily and local newspapers this week, the PBA criticizes the city for offering zero wage increases despite our historic achievements in crime reduction and the significant disparity between our wages and those of our peers in the local area. The ad will run in the *Daily News*, *El Diario*, *The Chief-Leader*, *Newsday*, the *Post* and community papers throughout Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx” (New York City Patrolman's Benevolent Association [NYC PBA], 2016).

These ads have graphic depictions of the hazards and challenges in which police officers are faced with on a daily basis, as well as graphic photos of police officers injured and killed in the line of duty. The ads regularly bash the mayor and city council, stating:

“We know what we signed up for. Does that mean we deserve less? A New York City police officer coming out of the academy today faces more challenges, more burdens, more danger and a greater terrorist threat than ever before...”

“...New York City police officers are already in the spotlight 24/7, but NYPD's body-worn camera program is poised to become the most extensive employee surveillance program in any workplace, anywhere in the world. The most

scrutinized policing job in the world belongs to the lowest paid police officers in the area. We deserve better.”

“A New York City police officer’s oath of office: I do hereby pledge and declare to uphold (under threat of arbitrary discipline, politically-motivated prosecution and opportunistic lawsuits) the Constitution of the United States, and the Constitution of the State of New York (and every regulation in the 1,600 page patrol guide, subject to oversight by internal affairs, CCRB, the inspector general, five district attorneys, and a federal monitor) and that I will faithfully discharge my (ever-expanding) duties as a New York City police officer to the best of my ability (for the lowest pay of any police officer in this area). So help me god. Raise your right hand and repeat after us: overworked, understaffed, underpaid, underappreciated. We support our city, when will our city support us?”

“Even mayor de Blasio’s chief labor negotiator knows...’New York City police salaries are a laughingstock; throughout the nation everyone knows that city cops are underpaid.’-Robert W. Linn, current director of NYC Labor Relations”

“How do Mayor de Blasio and Speaker Mark-Viverito take care of their ‘moral obligations?’ Central Park Five settlement: \$41 million, benefits for injured police officers: Nothing...Support equal benefits for injured police officers”

“The newest finest are the least protected. P.O. Rosa Rodriguez and P.O. James Li are two of the finest examples of the newest generation of New York City police officers. Both sacrificed their health to protect their fellow New Yorkers...their disability benefits will be substantially less than those of their more senior

colleagues. For some recently hired police officers these benefits amount to \$27 a day. Support equal benefits for disabled police officers.”

In addition to running this public advertisement campaign the PBA drafted a generic letter, which was disseminated among the rank-and-file of the police department. Many police officers completed this letter, as private individuals, and sent it to the mayor. The generic letter reads:

“I, \_\_\_\_\_, as a New York City police officer, request that Mayor Bill de Blasio and City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito refrain from attending my funeral services in the event that I am killed in the line of duty. Due to Mayor de Blasio and Speaker Mark-Viverito's consistent refusal to show police officers the support and respect they deserve, I believe that their attendance at the funeral of a fallen New York City police officer is an insult to that officer's memory and sacrifice.”

The PBA is not the only organization that represents emergency responders who are disseminating political propaganda to support their agenda of obtaining what they believe is fair, equitable, and essential benefits to emergency responders. The Fireman’s Association of the State of New York (FASNY) is the primary organization which represents New York State’s volunteer firefighters (Fireman’s Association of the State of New York, 2016). This organization is responsible for many things, including political action. Their recent politically based ad reads:

“I VOLUNTEERED TO PROTECT MY COMMUNITY...I DIDN’T  
VOLUNTEER TO GET CANCER. Help protect those who protect you- Join  
FASNY’s push for cancer coverage for volunteer firefighters.”

The political propaganda issued by these emergency service unions clearly indicates that there is a current problem regarding the duties tasked upon emergency responders and the benefits and compensation afforded to them.

No prior research has been conducted to develop an understanding of the perception of equity and justice by emergency responders due to their personal and situational variables. Also, no study has assessed the results of such on the level of proactivity with regards to the execution of essential duties. I examined the effects that the lack of adequate benefits and changing climate within this community will have on these professionals. The study also assesses the impact it has on their job performance, thus relating back to public safety.

### **Summary**

Emergency responders are responsible for maintaining public safety and order in society. It is essential that these individuals stay highly motivated to maintain proactive emergency services. Following current events, and the adjusted causal reasoning model of counterproductive work behavior, it is possible that an adjustment in situational variables controlled by employers could enhance the cognitive perception of work equity and justice among emergency responders. It is also possible that this perception could dictate whether essential services are provided in a more proactive manner or a more passive fashion. I sought to understand an in-depth explanation regarding how situational variables affect the perception of work equity and justice among emergency responders. I also sought to understand how this perception shapes the way that emergency responders execute their duties.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

Resources are essential for any organization to function properly. Without resources, there cannot be any form of production; this is especially true regarding human resources, which are the most essential of all resources in nearly every field of business (Faraji et al., 2015). Without the personnel to carry out functions, nothing will be accomplished. The emergency services are a field which is highly dependent on personnel, which in this case are emergency responders including law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians. To maintain the efficiency of human resources staff must be motivated (Faraji et al., 2015). Highly motivated, satisfied, and committed staff will produce higher quality results than unsatisfied, unmotivated, and non-committed personnel (Faraji et al., 2015).

Substantial research has been conducted in fields of human motivation, human behavior, and occupational behavior. Additionally, considerable prior research has been conducted on many aspects that have to deal with the culture group of emergency responders. Much of the existing research on emergency responders as a culture group is focused on leadership, diversity, satisfaction, retention, and justice. Although a substantial amount of research exists regarding motivation and behavior, and emergency responders, no current research exists which combines these factors. Additionally, no current research exists which examines the effects of perceived job equilibria and equity on job satisfaction among emergency responders, or any subgroups of emergency responders, and the effect in which this perception has on their level of proactivity (Jo & Shim, 2015).

Emergency responders, including law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical responders, compose a unique culture group. As a culture group, these professionals experience a familiar and unconventional occupational environment, shared hazards, and common experiences (Johnson, 2015; Violanti et al., 2012). As an accepted occupational risk, emergency responders are often placed in situations where they become exposed to substantial personal, health, civil, and even criminal liability (Davis, 2015; Hyde, 2016). An emergency responder is called to help others in their most critical time of need when they are often most vulnerable. Emergency responders often come to an emergency scene to aid the public without the time necessary to develop a well thought out plan of action. These professionals are forced to act on instinct, which although based on years of experience and training could subject them to personal liability (Hyde, 2016; Jo & Shim, 2015). Laws vary state by state, but in most instances emergency responders are protected from certain liabilities by law, and can be indemnified by their agency, municipality, and labor union; however, instances of personal liability do occur (Davis, 2015).

### **Relevance of the Literature to the Research Question**

The quantity and severity of liabilities which emergency responders are subjected to, as a result of their occupation and thus acceptance into this culture group will have an effect on their personal cognitive processing regarding their view and perception of equilibria, organizational justice, and equity. Prior research shows the influence of perceived organizational justice and injustice, income stability, and changing environments on an individual's job satisfaction. Prior research also shows the effects of job satisfaction on productivity, and on customer satisfaction. A comprehensive review of

the literature will show a definitive gap in the research, and a need for further research on the effect of these variables on the level of proactivity of emergency responders.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

All of the literature used in this review was retrieved through the online search engine Google Scholar. Google Scholar access all of the journals and databases which are available through Walden University's library. The search terms that I used included: *emergency responder proactivity, emergency responder motivation, police motivation, firefighter motivation, EMS motivation, job satisfaction, counterproductive work behavior, and employee organizational injustice.*

### **Emergency Responders as a Culture Group**

A culture group is a network of individuals who share significant commonalities. These commonalities include an accepted set of values, norms, feelings, understanding, and culture. When culture groups, especially those composed of an occupational group, develop a shared standard of values and professionalism, it can shape the entire occupational field (Burford, Morrow, Rothwell, Carter, & Illing, 2014). The values and professional standards set by culture groups can influence the behavior of each individual member of that culture group (Burford, 2014). Although these individuals share a common identity and unity, they also often exhibit strong personal pride for their particular organization or department (Morabito, 2014).

### **Understanding the Culture Group**

When assessing the culture group of emergency responders, it is important to understand how and why these individuals joined this unique culture group. As a member of this culture group, emergency responders subject themselves to significant

occupational hazards in exchange for a tremendously varying level of compensation and protections (Basinska & Wiciak, 2013). The base salary, pension, disability benefits, health benefits, and fringe benefits vary by job title, municipality, and labor union membership (Morabito, 2014). Although most emergency responders belong to a labor union, many do not (Morabito, 2014).

**Subgroups of Emergency Responders.** Many emergency responders, especially in the subgroups of firefighters, rescue workers, and emergency medical technicians, are not career responders; they are volunteers who must work a separate professional career (Haug & Gaskins, 2012). A study conducted among volunteer emergency medical service providers found that 53 percent of the responders indicated that the greatest motivating factor, which encouraged them to become an emergency responder, was their internal desire to help others. This study also found that 24 percent of the volunteer responders used the opportunity to join their particular volunteer department as a stepping stone to enter either the healthcare field or the emergency response and public safety field (Haug & Gaskins, 2012). Ten percent of the responders also indicated that their greatest motivating factor to join the department was to obtain free training and enhance their skills (Haug & Gaskins, 2012)

Understanding how and why individuals become emergency responders is essential to understanding the culture group as a whole; but knowing why they as individuals continue to stay in this specific line of work, which is full of occupational hazards, is equally as important. Haug and Gaskins (2012) found that the majority of volunteer emergency medical responders are influenced by internal social obligation, second by rational choice as a means to enhance their career path. As time goes on it was



found that many factors can influence volunteer members to retain their membership in emergency response organizations. A number of factors also restrict their involvement in the organization, and could restrict their ability to maintain their membership. The single greatest factor, which has been found to limit an individual's ability to remain an emergency responder is their financial situation, coupled with difficult scheduling requirements, and conflict between their career and emergency service work (Haug & Gaskins, 2012).

It was found that the organizational commitment of police officers could change over time. The change that was found in police officer organizational commitment over time was not unique to policing, or the emergency services. A significant relationship was found between length of service and level of organizational commitment, meaning that as an individual's length of service increased organizational commitment decreased (Moon & Jonson, 2012). Although police officers show a decline in organizational commitment over time, they still show an overall high level of organizational commitment when compared to other professions such as public utility employees, hospital employees, and bank employees (Moon & Jonson, 2012).

Although police officers were found to be the subset of individuals within this culture group to lose their organizational commitment the fastest over time, they were also found to maintain a high level of camaraderie throughout their careers (Johnson, 2015). Of a group of former police officers, 69 percent have cited a loss of nostalgia as the most negative aspect of leaving the field of emergency response (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). Specific responses mention a loss of camaraderie, satisfaction, and experience (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015).

Similar to volunteer emergency medical personnel the primary reason for police officers entering the field of law enforcement was for social and novelty reasons (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). Many officers cited reasons such as to begin a stimulating career, to stay physically active, unpredictability, and to work in a challenging environment (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). The next most common reason, which 24 percent of officers cited as being their reason for entering law enforcement was for practical purposes (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). Practical reasons encompass job security, paid time off and shift flexibility. Additionally, 18 percent of officers selflessly stated that they entered law enforcement to make a difference, contribute to the community, and help society (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015).

As a police officer's career advances, not only does their organizational commitment decrease, but it has been shown that their level of altruism also decreases. Social and altruistic reasons heavily dominate the initial reasoning behind an overwhelming majority of police officer's rational when entering the emergency services, however over time those that remain in law enforcement shift to more practical considerations. Fifty-six percent of active police officers stated that they stay in law enforcement because of practical considerations (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). Practical considerations are cited as dependence on a stable income, job security, comfort within their current position, and opportunity for promotion within their current organization (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015).

### **The Effects of Occupational Challenges**

Conflict between work and family obligations is a phenomenon at the forefront of workplace deviance research. WFC has been proven to have a great deal of effects on

employees in a wide variety of employment fields, including those in emergency responder (Basinska & Wiciak, 2013; Gächter, Savage, & Torgler, 2013). Similar to emergency responders, those working in retail positions are often subject to intense WFC. Retail sales associates often work long and varying shifts, which can be similar to the shift work schedules that many emergency responders are assigned. These types of shifts can create an imbalance between an individual's home life and work life, which creates WFC (Wagner & O'Neill, 2012).

Shift work can also limit an individual's ability to attend important life events such as weddings, and hinder social interaction with others in a different field working a more traditional type of schedule (Wagner & O'Neill, 2012). WFC can create an attitude of frustration, lead to deviant and counterproductive workplace behaviors, result in the development of coping mechanisms, and even lead to retaliatory behavior against co-workers, customers, and the employer (Basinska & Wiciak, 2013; Swimberghe, Jones, & Darrat, 2014). Swimberghe, Jones & Darrat (2014) found a positive relationship between WFC and job stress; they also found that excessive work demands can lead an individual to compensate for such burden by conducting personal activities while they are at work, or to complete work hastily and inefficiently.

### **Emotional Exhaustion**

WFC can also be linked to emotional and cognitive exhaustion (Swimberghe, Jones, & Darrat, 2014). When strained by WFC, emotional skills such as interpersonal skills, patience, and understanding, can exceed an individual person's tolerance. Swimberghe, Jones and Darrat (2014) found previous studies that show that emotional and cognitive exhaustion can be related to an increase in negative attitude towards the

employer on the part of the employee, workplace deviance, and increased customer complaints.

Emotional exhaustion is correlated to job insecurity; when one element is present it is likely that the other will develop (Piccoli & De Witte, 2015). Emotional exhaustion is the element which has the greatest causal relationship to burnout (Piccoli & De Witte, 2015). Unfair social exchange and organizational injustice between the employee and employer is a major catalyst for emotional exhaustion (Piccoli & De Witte, 2015). These facts can lead to the reasonable deduction that perceived organizational injustice can cause emotional exhaustion and job insecurity. The feelings that develop through this process can lead to counterproductive workplace behaviors.

### **Fatigue**

Many emergency responders are required to work a rotating work schedule or are regularly assigned to unconventional or irregular shifts. Fighting societal and natural tendencies to sleep at night and work through the day can be difficult to adjust to and lead to a condition known as fatigue (Violanti et al., 2012). “Fatigue is an impairment of mental and physical functions, including sleepiness, reduced physical and mental performance, depressed mood and loss of motivation” (Violanti et al., 2012, p. 218). The development of fatigue among emergency responders can increase both the likelihood of sustaining a line of duty injury and the likelihood of the development of job dissatisfaction.

Fatigue can increase the risk of injury as it creates a degraded level of alertness (Violanti et al., 2012). Working night shifts increase the probability of sustaining a line of

duty injury and developing fatigue. This likelihood is compounded with successive night shifts. The likelihood of sustaining a line of duty injury on the fourth consecutive night shift is 36 percent higher than on the first shift (Violanti et al., 2012).

### **Organizational Justice**

There are a number of theories as to the cause of deviant workplace behavior. Nasir and Bashir (2012) conducted a study among government employees and found that a number of factors can be attributed to counterproductive workplace behaviors. Factors such as level of job satisfaction, financial pressure, organizational injustice, employee perception, and organizational environment are among factors which can impact deviant behavior within the workplace (Nasir & Bashir, 2012). Among all of these factors the perception of organizational injustice and job satisfaction have the greatest significance with regards to a positive relationship to deviant workplace behaviors (Gächter, Savage, & Torgler, 2013; Nasir & Bashir, 2012). Although organizational injustice can be limited, it may not be possible to be removed; however, the effects of organizational injustice can be mitigated. Open communications can help to mitigate these effects.

“Fair treatment regarding information about organizational services appears to be more important to employees than the fairness of service allocation or the procedures used to determine that allocation...being unable to use a desired service is undoubtedly frustrating, but a thorough explanation of what services are available, how decisions regarding use are made, and/or why permission to use a particular service was denied can partially compensate for unfavorable treatment and forestall negative reactions. Not receiving full or honest explanations regarding the availability of and decisions made ...triggers, according to the job

stress framework, negative emotions that are expressed as CWB

[counterproductive workplace behaviors]” (Beauregard, 2014, p. 783).

Although open communications can mitigate the adverse effects of organizational injustice on counterproductive workplace behaviors, it is not always an available option within the emergency services, which generally operate in a paramilitary structure.

### **Organizational Commitment**

Supporting previous information which shows that job satisfaction is positively related to organizational commitment and job commitment, is information which proves that police officer employee cynicism is negatively related to organizational and job commitment (Olapegba & Onuoha, 2013). Employee and organizational cynicism was also found to be positively related to counterproductive workplace behaviors (Olapegba & Onuoha, 2013). Organizational commitment is an essential component to human resource management. Organizational commitment is the degree to which an employee identifies, values, and relates to their organization, as well as the organization’s goals, values, and mission (Faraji et al., 2015).

An employee’s level of organizational commitment can have a dictating effect on their work conduct (Faraji et al., 2015). A wide-range of counterproductive work behaviors can be attributed to negative organizational commitment; including excessive absenteeism, lateness, high rates of attrition, excessive stress, and low levels of job satisfaction (Faraji et al., 2015; Moon & Jonson, 2012). Level of employment and job category has been shown to have an effect on the level of organizational commitment of certain groups. It was found that employees with greater job security have higher levels of organizational commitment than those that are provisionally, temporarily, or otherwise

non-permanently employed (Faraji et al., 2015). It was also found that hospital employees working in an administrative capacity had greater levels of organizational commitment than those working in a more physical capacity, such as doctors and nurses (Faraji et al., 2015).

**Labor Attrition within the Emergency Services.** Job stress and job satisfaction are among the leading causes of labor attrition within law enforcement (Allisey, Noblet, Lamontagne, & Houdmont, 2013). Low levels of organizational commitment have also been seen to lead to high levels of employee turnover within law enforcement (Johnson, 2015). The emergency response field has greater levels of personnel turnover rates than other professions (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). High turnover rates in this field can be attributed to both voluntary and involuntary causes. Involuntary causes can be the result of disciplinary action, health issues, mandatory retirement criteria, and death; voluntary causes can be attributed to transferring to other emergency service agencies, early retirement, and resignation to pursue a career in a different field (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015).

Labor attrition within the emergency service field can have a devastating effect on operations. Hiring and training new police officers is expensive, labor intensive, and requires a lengthy bureaucratic process (Allisey et al., 2013; Gächter, Savage, & Torgler, 2013; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). There are additional effects on organizational morale and satisfaction caused by labor due to rapid and high turnover rates (Allisey et al., 2013; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). Job-related stress among the police officers who remain within the department can be increased due to a

strain on shift rotations, over time, and support which is hindered due to a limited and stressed workforce (Allisey et al., 2013; Basinska & Wiciak, 2013).

Work-related variables were found to have a significant relationship with work satisfaction among police officers, where personal variables were not found to have a significant relationship (Jo & Shim, 2015). Howes and Goodman-Delahunty (2015) found that 70 percent of police officers currently are, or in the past have considered a career change. This study additionally found that of the police officers that have considered a career change, 50 percent had considered a career change more than once (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). Sixty-six percent of officers cited problems with policing as their primary reason for considering a career change (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). Twenty-five percent of former police officers cited practical considerations, such as an inability to balance work and life events, shift work, stress, and insufficient pay, as the number one reason for former police officers to leave law enforcing for another career track (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). Of the officers that have left law enforcement, 51 percent stated that the most positive aspect is related to practical considerations, such as better hours and working conditions; where 42 percent reported a reduction in stress, frustration, and constraint was the most positive aspect (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015).

**The Effect of Rank.** It was found that higher-ranking officers have lower levels of employee cynicism, higher levels of organizational commitment, and higher levels of job commitment than lower ranking officers. Olapegba and Onuoha (2013) attribute the disparity between rank and commitment to the greater level of benefits afforded to the higher-ranking officers. Olapegba and Onuoha (2013) explain that higher-ranking



officers have lower occupational hazards, less frequent interactions with the public, higher levels of pay and financial compensation, greater career opportunities, and more overall fringe benefits than lower ranking officers. Although promotions within the ranks of law enforcement officers were shown to positively affect organizational commitment and negatively affect cynicism, officer seniority was shown to have an opposite effect (Johnson, 2012). As police officer tenure increases their job satisfaction was shown to decline, thus also affecting organizational commitment (Johnson, 2012).

Higher-ranking officers were also found to sustain a line of duty injury far less frequently than lower level officers (Violanti et al., 2012). Higher-ranking officers additionally are less likely to work on a rotating or night shift than other officers (Violanti et al., 2012). Age and length of service were also found to be correlated to rate of occupational injury. Younger and more junior officers sustain a greater number of work-related injuries than older and more senior officers (Violanti et al., 2012). This can be explained by a number of factors; junior and younger officers are more likely to work in a less desirable assignment, thus busier and more likely to be exposed to hazards (Violanti et al., 2012).

**The Benefits of Health and Wellness in the Workplace.** Organizational commitment can be strengthened through the implementation of work-life benefits (Caillier, 2013). Caillier (2013) found that work-life benefits do not have an impact on individual and specific job involvement, however, do impact general organizational commitment. Programs that were analyzed include health and wellness programs, childcare, eldercare, telework, and flexible working arrangements. Health and wellness

programs were seen to have the greatest impact on organizational commitment, over other programs (Caillier, 2013).

Health and wellness programs have an additional benefit as they may increase job performance, and decrease the likelihood of injury; especially for those working in a career field which requires physical exertion and exposure to an above-average level of physical hazards (Caillier, 2013; Violanti et al., 2012). Employer support for employee mental and physical health and support for wellbeing programs have been shown to strengthen the organizational exchange relationship between employees and employers (Piccoli & De Witte, 2015). Another factor that can be attributed to strong levels of organizational commitment among emergency responders is the perception of organizational support (Johnson, 2015). Physical health and wellbeing can affect an individual's perception of work equity.

**Workplace Injuries.** A study of nurse assistants who sustained a work-related injury found that work-related injuries create a lower level of job satisfaction (McCaughey et al., 2014). Occupational injuries were also found to increase employee turnover intentions, thus affecting early attrition and further straining organizations (McCaughey et al., 2014). In addition to the human resource implications associated with workplace-related injuries, there can be a substantial fiscal cost to employers. In one year, the fiscal cost to employers across the United States of work-related injuries was greater than 59,000,000,000.00 dollars (Violanti et al., 2012).

Workplace injuries are more frequent among emergency responders than other professionals as emergency responders are continuously exposed to hazards (Violanti et al., 2012). Significant portions of the injuries sustained by emergency service workers

were serious, as they resulted in lost work time. Thirty-eight percent of police officer line of duty injuries led to a loss of work time, and 39 percent of firefighter line of duty injuries resulted in a loss of work time (Violanti et al., 2012). In addition to sustaining more frequent workplace injuries than other professions, “public safety personnel had a threefold increase in the rate of morbidity and mortality while working” (Violanti et al., 2012, p. 218). Nationwide in the year 2010, 14.2 per 100,000 law enforcement officers sustained line of duty deaths (Violanti et al., 2012). Emergency medical service workers sustained fatal line of duty injuries at a lower but comparable rate of 12.7 per 100,000 (Violanti et al., 2012).

### **Burnout**

Burnout is another factor which can affect an individual's job performance. Burnout occurs when an individual chronically surpasses their tolerable level of psychological strain as related to the performance of their work duties (McCarty & Skogan, 2012). McCarty & Skogan (2012) found that burnout occurs with those working in the emergency service field greater than those working in other areas. It was also found that both sworn and civilian personnel working in the emergency service field experience comparable levels of job-related burnout to each other; however Johnson (2012) found that police officers experience burnout significantly earlier in their careers than other professionals. The reoccurring theme that was shown to affect levels of burnout among those working in the emergency response field came from WFC, balancing outside responsibilities, organizational justice, and conflict with supervision (McCarty & Skogan, 2012).

Nurses who work hospital settings are a professional group similar to the culture group of emergency responders. They are often subject to similar rotating and lengthy work shifts, work-life conflict, and mandatory overtime. Job satisfaction among nurses who work longer shifts was found to be lower than nurses working shorter shifts (Stimpfel, Sloane, & Aiken, 2012). Scheduled long shifts coupled with unscheduled mandatory or quasi-mandatory overtime shifts due to organizational need were found to greatly decrease job satisfaction (Stimpfel, Sloane, & Aiken, 2012). Along with decreased job satisfaction the effects of long shifts coupled with overtime was found to increase turnover rates and increase burnout (Stimpfel, Sloane, & Aiken, 2012). Stimpfel, Sloane, and Aiken (2012) found that “patients were less satisfied with their care when there were higher proportions of nurses working shifts of thirteen or more hours and were more satisfied when there were higher proportions of nurses working eleven or fewer hours” (p. 2505). Extended shifts can also be linked to greater levels of workplace injuries. It was found that the rate of line of duty injuries among emergency responders is twice as high in their twelfth hour of work as it is within their first eight hours of work (Violanti et al., 2012).

### **Work Equity**

The development of an equitable relationship between an employee and an employer can be assumed to be the primary purpose of employment (Piccoli & De Witte, 2015). With the acceptance of this value, financial reward meaning pay satisfaction should demonstrate a positive relationship with job satisfaction; which is supported by research among multiple sample groups of various demographics (Hofmans, De Gieter, & Pepermans, 2013). Research also supports the concept of individual difference,

meaning that different individuals have different personality types and different viewpoints on work ethics (Hofmans, De Gieter, & Pepermans, 2013). Following this concept, it was found that not every individual will have a positive relationship between satisfaction with pay and job satisfaction (Hofmans, De Gieter, & Pepermans, 2013). This phenomenon is explained through the idea of individual difference, which explains that other benefits aside from financial rewards can impact an employee's job satisfaction. When an employee is unsatisfied with their compensation, they are more likely to be involved in misconduct, and corruption (Semukhina, 2014).

**Life Satisfaction.** Contrary to their hypothesis Wagner and O'Neill (2012) found that firefighters do not experience greater life satisfaction than their peers within the same community at the same socioeconomic status. Wagner and O'Neill (2012) essentially attribute this to the tradeoff between the aggravating and mitigating aspects of the job benefits and job requirements in which emergency responders face. When comparing emergency responders who for the most part are municipal employees, filling an essential and permanent role to those working in the private sector, emergency responders will generally have a greater level of job security, thus resulting in a higher level of financial security (Wagner & O'Neill, 2012). In addition to a greater level of financial security, emergency responders often generally work a rotating schedule which allows for greater levels of time off than those working in a more traditional field. Job security was found to increase job satisfaction among emergency responders (Jo & Shim, 2015). Although these mitigating factors help to balance the aggravating factors associated with this field, they were not found to overpower the aggravating effects of shiftwork, nor the impact of a paramilitary organizational structure (Wagner & O'Neill, 2012). It was found that those

in the fire service experienced far greater levels of dissatisfaction with supervision than their civilian counterparts (Wagner & O'Neill, 2012).

### **Emergency Responder Proactivity**

With limitations to their study, Moon and Jonson (2012) discussed the effects of organizational commitment on proactivity. Police officers with a higher level of proactivity are more likely to engage situations where they will be taking a law enforcement action; than would a less proactive officer that would be waiting for a situation to arise in which they are called to respond. Proactivity will then likely result in a greater number of pursuits, traffic stops, street encounters, and uses of force (Moon & Jonson, 2012). More passive officers will then be less likely to end up in a use of force or pursuit situation (Moon & Jonson, 2012). An increase in organizational commitment has also been shown to increase ethical decision-making and actions (Johnson, 2015).

### **Changing Environments**

The culture group of emergency responders has faced many changes, especially concerning public policy over recent times (Gächter, Savage, & Torgler, 2013). Johnson (2015), along with Howes and Goodman-Delahunty (2015) specifically note the ever-changing political environment, both internally within agencies and externally within general government operations, in which police and other law enforcement officers are subject to; these individuals are arguably under the most scrutiny and subject to the highest level of liability as compared to other professionals. Public policy with specific regard to emergency response along with public support for emergency responders continuously fluctuates and evolves with current events (Gächter, Savage, & Torgler, 2013). Along with changing events and political climates, come the changing and added

responsibilities in which emergency responders are tasked with. This could be viewed as a stress catalyst (Gächter, Savage, & Torgler, 2013).

The current heroin epidemic in the United States can be used to exemplify the way in which current events has a policy impact on emergency responders. Heroin overdose deaths in current years are six times higher than they were two decades ago (Davis, Carr, Southwell, & Beletsky, 2015). In response to this dramatic shift many states have authorized street-level police officers and basic emergency medical technicians to carry and administer naloxone, and many departments are requiring its implementation (Davis et al., 2015). Naloxone is a prescription opioid blocker, which has been available for use on ambulances by advanced medical technicians for decades; however, was not available to basic technicians and lay persons (Davis et al., 2015).

With the addition of this new protocol, which is expanding to the entire emergency response community, will come many additional changes. These changes will include additional training, additional equipment for responders to carry, additional exposure, and further liability (Davis et al., 2015). To current date, there have been no civil cases arising from the administration of naloxone personally against an individual emergency responder. However, the protocol has just begun the implementation phase (Davis et al., 2015). Job satisfaction can be related to the way in which emergency responders perceive required changes. Jo and Shim (2015) found that “the more satisfied officers are, the more likely they are to be receptive to changes” (p. 236).

### **Effect of Labor Unions**

Labor unions have shaped the entire emergency service field as a profession and emergency responders as a culture group (Doerner & Doerner, 2013; Morabito, 2014).

Before the development of emergency service labor unions, emergency service employees came together in fraternal organizations such as the Fraternal Order of Police and the Fire Department Emerald Society (Morabito, 2014). Emergency service personnel have traditionally had a close working relationship with each other.

Professionals in these fields began coming together to enhance their common interests before the twentieth century (Morabito, 2014). The unionization of many emergency service professionals was hindered in 1919 after the Boston police strike, which turned a municipal labor dispute into an armed confrontation that resulted in public disorder (Doerner & Doerner, 2013; Morabito, 2014). The Boston police strike ended with a majority of the police department being permanently laid off and halted the possibility of collective bargaining within this field for several decades (Doerner & Doerner, 2013; Morabito, 2014). In 1962 the possibility of collective bargaining resurfaced when President Kennedy signed an executive order permitting federal employees collective bargaining rights. This public policy change led way for many police, fire, and emergency medical response groups to unionize (Doerner & Doerner, 2013).

Currently, the majority of firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and law enforcement officers within the United States at local, state, and federal levels are unionized; for example, 71 percent of police officers nationwide belong to a labor union (Morabito, 2014). Labor unions have a tremendous influence over the profession (Davis, 2013; Doerner & Doerner, 2013; Morabito, 2014). Labor unions often influence recruitment processes, selection processes, training requirements, training prohibitions, promotional processes, and develop professional standards (Morabito, 2014). Labor unions additionally give individual emergency response professionals a collective voice



to speak out against negative, unsafe, and injustice practices (Doerner & Doerner, 2013). Emergency service labor unions negotiate labor contracts for responders with their municipality, which sets pay rates, longevity bonuses, educational incentives, and other essential benefits (Doerner & Doerner, 2013).

Although emergency service unions are essential for emergency responders, they have recently faced many challenges due to recent fiscal crises (Freeman & Han, 2012). A substantial amount of legislation has been proposed at local, state, and federal levels to restrict the power of public labor unions, however, much of it has been successfully lobbied against (Freeman & Han, 2012). Emergency service unions were found to increase morale, job satisfaction, and organizational justice while reducing perceptions of inequity and injustice (Davis, 2013; Doerner & Doerner, 2013; Morabito, 2014). They additionally reduce feelings of job insecurity (Doerner & Doerner, 2013). In hard financial times, unions have worked with municipal leadership to avoid layoffs by strategically implementing labor compromises (Doerner & Doerner, 2013). Unions unify the voice of the individuals, especially with regards to public information, and public lobbying (Doerner & Doerner, 2013). Although labor unions represent the interests of their membership, and innovative policies are generally deemed unfavorable at the individual level, unions were not found to reduce innovation within the emergency services, but rather stabilize them ensuring well thought out and proper implementation (Morabito, 2014).

### **Effects of Employee Dissatisfaction**

As previously discussed, WFC can compound job stress which can lead to deviant and counterproductive workplace behaviors (Swimberghe, Jones, & Darrat, 2014). In the

retail market, it was found that the most harmful effect which occurs from employee counterproductive workplace behaviors, is customer dissatisfaction (Swimberghe, Jones, & Darrat, 2014). In private industry, the breakdown of customer satisfaction and relations can have a devastating effect on overall operations. In the public sector, the customers are the general public. Within the emergency services, the customers are human beings in urgent need of emergency aid (Swimberghe, Jones, & Darrat, 2014). Satisfaction of customers during an emergency response is paramount. When the public is dissatisfied with police services, it was found to result in severe underreporting of crimes (Semukhina, 2014). The underreporting of crimes results in an increased circle of victimization and flawed crime statistics (Semukhina, 2014).

Employee satisfaction should affect customer satisfaction, just as employee dissatisfaction affects customer dissatisfaction. This can relate to the emergency services as well. When employees such as police officers are more satisfied with their employment the quality of their work should be increased. Every aspect of work and organizational commitment can be influenced by job satisfaction; it was found that “job satisfaction had significant influence not only on work-related outcomes, such as job performance, commitment and turnover rates, but also on the relationship between police officers and citizens” (Jo & Shim, 2015, p. 236).

### **Summary**

The prior literature reviewed in this exhaustive review is all recent, and pertinent to the study at hand. The literature in this review is based on original studies which brought new information to the field of public policy. The literature review begins with an explanation and in-depth review of the culture group of emergency responders. This

information is necessary as it is used to develop an understanding of the study subjects.

The study then reviews the major occupational challenges which emergency responders face on a regular basis such as emotional exhaustion, fatigue, issues of organizational justice, organizational commitment, burnout, and issues related to work equity.

Understanding these challenges will increase the understanding of the situational and personal variables which influence a person's cognitive processing, and how that processing will shape the perceptions that are drawn.

The literature additionally reviews the changing environments within the field of emergency response, the effects of this change, and the effects of labor unions on the work that these professionals do, and the compensation in which they receive. All of these variables must be accounted for when assessing the cognitive processing of individuals within this culture group. Finally, the literature reviews the effects of employee dissatisfaction, as well as results of such on past research. All of the literature used in this review is essential to understanding the mindset of this culture group. Understanding the mindset of the culture group is critical step that must be achieved before addressing the perceptions that are drawn by members of the group or the impact of that perception on their duties.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this research was to understand how the benefits and compensation afforded to emergency responders affects their perception of equity and justice. In addition, the purpose of this study was to understand how the perception of equity and justice developed by emergency responders affects how they execute their duties. In this chapter, I discuss the research questions, design, sampling strategy, the procedure for data collection and analysis, as well as methods of ensuring quality data.

### **Research Design**

This study was centrally focused on two research questions. I used the first to understand the relationship between the benefits and compensation afforded to emergency responders, and their perception of work equity, equality, justice, and risk management. The second research question sought to understand if the perception of equity, equality, justice, and risk management impacts the execution of an emergency responder's duties. Following the causal reasoning model of counterproductive work behavior which has been modified for this study the benefits and compensation afforded to emergency responders should have a strong impact on their perception; however, this is yet to be proven. Additionally following the modified causal reasoning model of counterproductive work behavior the perception developed by emergency responders should affect the execution of their duties.

This study was qualitative in nature. A qualitative approach was chosen for this study instead of a quantitative or mixed methods approach for several reasons.

Qualitative research is more generally associated with an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, such as the one at hand. Qualitative methods, such as interviews, are more appropriate to stimulate the types of information from the study population which is required in this research. Additionally, I was not seeking widely generalizable results, but rather to develop a new understanding of an unexplored phenomenon.

Phenomenology is a research approach where I learn about a phenomenon through the lived experiences of others. This approach captures information directly from those that have experienced the phenomenon. Ethnography is the study of a culture group. An ethnographic study will obtain information about a culture group directly from observations, or through interviews with members of the culture group.

Both approaches were blended to create an understanding of the experiences and perceptions developed by members of a specific culture group that have experienced the phenomenon at hand. Emergency responders compose a culture group as they have many shared experiences, values, and beliefs. Although this research obtained information from individual members of the culture group, the individuals will be speaking as a member of the group as a whole, therefore the assessment will be more inclusive. Every emergency responder has experienced the current phenomenon, which is the development of a perception based on situational and personal variables. Through interviews, I intended on understanding the perceptions that developed as a direct cause of the benefits and compensation afforded to these individuals. Additionally, I used the study subject's lived experiences to understand if and how these developed perceptions impacted the execution of their duties.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The data for the study was obtained solely through the use of offsite interviews, which were not conducted in the workplace. I am a member of the culture group under study, so regardless of whether a prior relationship exists between the sample population and I, there will be an underlying professional relationship. Some of the research participants may have a professional relationship with me, as they may have formerly worked with the researcher or may currently be employed for the same municipality. Those that currently work for the same municipality as mine are regularly assigned to a different work site and under a separate chain of command. The sample population did not include anyone who is, or was ever a subordinate or student of mine.

As a member of the culture group I was careful to avoid the influence of any bias. The questions that I asked were not leading, but open-ended in nature. The questions were designed to be thought provoking, and encourage the sharing of personal feelings, perceptions, and experiences of the individuals not that of the researcher. To mitigate the risks of the influence of any bias on the part of the researcher the study utilized a member checking procedure. The member checking procedure allowed the study subjects to review the data for accuracy. Finally, no incentives were offered to any research participants.

### **Methodology**

#### **Participant Selection**

As a culture group, emergency responders have a reputation for being very close-knit and avoiding work-related communications with those outside of their culture group.

Due to these factors, it was difficult for the researcher to secure a sampling. To ensure that I was able to obtain a study sample population a purposefully selected sample was utilized. A purposefully selected research sample population is most appropriate, as it will allow the researcher to best use the limited resources that are available (Duan, Bhaumik, Palinkas, & Hoagwood, 2015). This strategy also enabled the researcher to select the individual cases which will provide the most in-depth information (Duan et al., 2015). The sample was derived from the professional network that I have developed throughout his career in the emergency services.

In addition to a purposefully selected sample, I utilized a quota sample. A quota sample is employed to ensure that certain characteristics of a population are present in the sample and to control the exact extent to which it is present (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, & Nigam, 2013). I has identified three major subgroups within the culture group of emergency responders. These subgroups are law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians. I ensured that each of these subgroups is represented in the sample population by ten individuals.

Ten responders from each subgroup, totaling 30 total participants will be an ideal sample size. This sample is large enough to generate results that will be broad enough to be transferable to a different geographic area. I personally spoke with each participant and probed for in-depth information. These interviews were time-consuming, and saturated with a copious amount of information. The sample population was be drawn from the professional network that I have developed throughout his career. The participants were be selected from several different agencies within the same geographic

area. When the initial sampling strategy failed to recruit sufficient participants then I followed up with initial requests that failed to generate a response, and send requests to new participants.

Other demographic information aside from which subgroup the participant is from will be pertinent to the study. Information regarding the participant's length of service and rank will be important to the study. Demographic information relevant to personal variables under the casual reasoning model of counterproductive work behavior will be pertinent. These variables will include outside employment, level of education, number of dependents, as well as debt and equity. Other personal demographic information such as race and gender will not be pertinent to this study.

### **Instrumentation**

A direct approach was used to collect the data from members of the culture group under study. I personally interviewed every member of the study population and audio-record the data retrieved from them to assess their perception of the phenomenon. The audio-recorded data was then later transcribed by hand. Collecting data through interviews was the most appropriate for this study. Other data collection methods, such as observations or document analysis would not be able to provide an in-depth understanding of the perceptions developed by the culture group.

### **Recruitment Procedures**

The primary source of data collection for this study was through interviews conducted by the researcher. The interviews were conducted between the researcher and one study participant at a time. The interviewer met in person with each of the study



participants and interviewed them. Each interview took place on one occasion, without any follow-up interviews. The interviews were initially audio-recorded. After the data had been transcribed, organized, and coded the researcher contacted each of the participants and allowed them to member check the data for accuracy.

During the interviews I asked probing questions to stimulate in-depth responses. These questions were open-ended. The questions were designed to provoke feelings, an understanding of ideal situations, and to invoke an interpretation of complexities within their feelings of lived experiences. The interviewer showed primary source documents to the study participant to obtain information regarding their perception of the issues. These documents included emergency service labor union contracts and political propaganda.

### **Data Collection Setting**

The interviews were conducted outside of a workplace setting. A workplace environment was avoided to ensure a feeling of comfort and security on the part of the interviewee. Adding this level of support helped to increase the degree of openness during data collection. It also allowed the study population to freely and openly discuss their perception, job satisfaction, and the way in which they execute their job functions.

### **Data Analysis**

The raw data for this study was in the form of audio-recorded interview transcripts. Prior to analysis these transcripts first had to be transcribed on paper. The transcription was conducted manually by the researcher. Once the raw data was transcribed on paper, the data was unstructured and complex requiring organization and interpretation. It then had to be coded.

When coding the data, the researcher analyzed the data to identify common and reoccurring themes among the interviews. The data was coded by research question, first answering RQ1, and then RQ2. The first set of interview questions were designed to generate information relevant to the participant's demographics, personal variables, and situational variables. The next set of interview questions were designed to extract the individual's developed perceptions of work equity and justice. Once the data collected in response to these questions has been transcribed it will then be organized by commonalities. Based on this organization the researcher was able to understand the impact of the situational and personal variables on the developed perceptions of each individual.

The third set of questions was designed to extract how the individual's perception impacts the way in which they execute their duties. When coding and organizing the data retrieved from this set of questions the researcher already had an understanding of the perceptions developed by each individual. I then compared the levels of proactivity to the perceptions developed by the individual responders. I had several variables to compare; these variables include personal variables, situational variables, type of responder, length of service, rank, and other demographic factors. I was then able to draw conclusions related to the research questions based on this information. The data was then able to be displayed in a visual table to ease future observation and interpretation.

### **Data Quality and Trustworthiness**

Maintaining data quality is essential when conducting research. Although reliability and validity are more commonly associated with quantitative research, they

should still be noted here. Reliability focuses on the ability to replicate a study and maintain the same results. With this study reliability was low as the goal was to assess the perception of members of a particular culture group. Perceptions are influenced by experiences, training, education, and other life factors which all evolve over time. As the factors which influence perception change, a person's perception can redevelop.

Validity is focused on ensuring that results are correct. The greatest potential threat to validity which existed in this study was bias. The study concentrated on a specific culture group; therefore, participants were from this group thus entering the study with some degree of prejudice and bias. Additionally, I am also a member of this culture group, therefore could be seen to have a degree of bias. I took action to ensure that bias does not affect the study data.

To reduce the influence of bias and ensure validity I allowed study participants to member check the data. Member checking is a strategy which can be used to ensure data quality. It allows for study participants to review the raw data and statements that they made to ensure accuracy (Harper & Cole, 2012). Implementing this policy ensured that the data the researcher obtains from the interviews are accurate, and the proper perceptions were obtained accurately.

### **Limitations**

The purpose of this study was to obtain in-depth information; therefore, the given sample population was ideally set to include 30 participants. Thirty participants is a much smaller and less representative population than would be used in a quantitative study; however, it was viewed as most appropriate for this study. The population size will

impact the generalizability of the study, however the given size will still have a level of transferability. Due to the study not being experimental, or utilizing a large and random sample it will be difficult to relate the study results across a broader spectrum. However, if the study results indicate that the given phenomenon is in need of broader exploration, a quantitative study could be conducted at a later date.

### **Ethical Procedures and Participant Protection**

Prior to the collection of any data I had to obtain permission from the university's institutional review board. Obtaining permission from this board is essential to ensure the maintenance proper procedures and ethical standards. When conducting a study utilizing human subjects ensuring their protection is paramount. The study population is not a special population with any increased risks, hazards, or unique concerns.

Voluntariness and confidentiality was fully expressed. Each study participant was fully informed about the study and its implications when they were recruited for the study, and immediately before the interviews. The study participants were informed that they had the right to opt out of the study at any time. Data containing any identifier was kept private and confidential by the researcher. Additionally, all interview questions were phrased in a way to reduce as much bias as possible, while remaining impartial and as non-threatening as possible.

### **Summary**

This qualitative analysis sought to develop an understanding of the effects of the benefits and compensation afforded to emergency responders and on their perception of equity and justice. This study additionally sought to understand how the developed

perception impacts the way in which they carry out their job function. The qualitative design was be a blend of ethnography and phenomenology. This combination is justified by the research questions which are focused on the lived experiences of those in a particular culture group.

The raw data was taken from interviews with members of this culture group. The sample population was taken from a purposefully selected sample which was rich with information and an available resource. The purposefully selected sample additionally had a quota element to include each subsect of emergency responder. I manually transcribe the raw data, and analyzed it for commonalities from which conclusions were drawn.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to develop an in-depth understanding of the relationship between the benefits and compensation afforded to emergency responders and their perception of equity, equality, and justice within the work place. The study additionally sought to develop an understanding of the impact of their developed perception on the execution of their duties. This study had two research questions:

RQ1: What is the relationship between the benefits and compensation afforded to emergency responders and their perception of work equity, equality, justice, and risk management?

RQ2: How does the perception of equity, equality, justice, and risk management impact the execution of an emergency responder's duties?

### **Chapter Organization**

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the way in which the research study was conducted. The research setting, study demographics, data collection, data analysis and results will be explained throughout the chapter.

### **Setting**

The target population for this study included ten law enforcement officers, ten firefighters, and ten emergency medical service responders. Due to logistical limitations the final study population was ten law enforcement officers, one emergency medical

technician, two firefighters, and 11 individuals who are both firefighters and emergency medical service responders. Although the final study population only included 24 individual emergency responders, the target goal was met for the law enforcement category and exceeded for the firefighter and emergency medical service categories.

All of the emergency responders interviewed all serve or have served within New York City or have served for a local municipality in the suburbs adjoining New York City. At the time of the study, many emergency responders were working for many years out of contract with the City of New York or had recently signed a new contract with the city. These labor contracts cover agreements regarding pay, other types of compensation, fringe benefits, healthcare coverage, time off, disability coverage, retirement and back pay. At the time of the interviews the UFA, the union representing New York City firefighters, and the DSA, the labor union representing New York City deputy sheriffs, had both recently signed an agreement with the city after being without a contract for several years.

The Patrolman's Benevolent Association, the labor union representing police officers within New York City, were unable to reach a fair agreement with the city and their labor dispute led to arbitration. DC 37, the labor union which represents emergency medical technicians and paramedics, were still working out of contract pending negotiations with the NYC OLR at the time of the interviews. These labor agreements or lack thereof could have a tremendous influence on the perception developed by emergency responders.

## **Demographics**

Emergency responder is a broad term used to define the greater culture group of those working in emergency services. Within this culture group there are three subgroups. These three subgroups are law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical service responders. This study utilized a sample population of at least ten members of each subgroup. The individuals utilized for the study's sample population come from a diversified background with greatly varying years of service, level of education, race, homeownership status, and family status.

### **Law Enforcement Officers**

The ten law enforcement officers utilized for this study are all actively serving. They all work within New York City. Each of the law enforcement officers work in the same borough of the city, which is Brooklyn. Brooklyn is the most populated borough within New York City and geographically one of the smallest. These factors make Brooklyn one of the most challenging areas to work in emergency services.

Of the 10 officers interviewed seven were males and three were females. The years of service of the officers ranged from 1.5 years to 30 years, with an average of 9.55 years of service in law enforcement. Only one of the officers have a level of formal education lower than a bachelor's degree, seven have bachelor degrees and two have graduate degrees. Nine of the officers are operations level officers who work in the field, one is a mid-level manager who splits her time between field work and administrative work. Four of the officers have children and six do not.



Four of the officers interviewed identify as Caucasian, two as Black, three as Hispanic, one as Asian, and none as mixed-race or other. With regards to age, four of the officers are in their twenties, three are in their thirties, one is in their forties, and two are in their fifties. The officers living situation is as follows, five officers own their own home, three rent an apartment or house, and two currently live in a family member's house.

### **Firefighters**

The study utilized 13 firefighters for the sample population. All of the firefighters utilized in the sample population are volunteer firefighters who work in a suburb adjoining New York City. Eleven of the firefighters utilized in this sample population additionally work as emergency medical responders. These firefighters are from three different fire departments within Nassau County. Twelve of the firefighters interviewed are male and one is female. Ten of the firefighters are still active responders and three are former firefighters recently departed from service.

**Volunteer firefighters.** Noting that all of the firefighters interviewed in this study are volunteer as opposed to fulltime paid firefighters is significant. Although these volunteer professionals working in the suburb provide the exact same services as those who are paid and work fulltime in the urban city environment they are exposed to a different element, expectation, and overall environment. These factors have an impact on their developed perceptions.

According to the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) (2014) the rate of fatalities among volunteer firefighters is higher than

that of fulltime paid firefighters. The majority of these fatalities are cardiac and stress related. The majority of these fatalities are sustained by firefighters who are in an age bracket of 40 to 65 years of age (DHSES, 2014). Members of the volunteer fire service are generally able to continue working into later years than those working as a career firefighter. This fact of age, along with other reasonable speculations regarding routine, training, and preparation explain how and why the volunteer fire service has a greater rate of fatalities than that of the career service in New York.

Although the career service in New York experiences a lower general rate of line of duty fatalities than that within the volunteer fire service, they do experience a higher rate of injury (DHSES, 2014). This can be reasonably attributed to many factors such as larger and more complex structures, longer working hours, and more aggressive tactics. The rate of injury and fatalities among firefighters will impact the way in which their perceptions of benefits and compensation is impacted. When assessing benefits and compensation afforded to firefighters those working in the profession as a career have to have a significant focus on their salary, where volunteers can focus on a wider array of necessities. Although the focus may differ between volunteer and career firefighters, their general needs will always be the same as they perform the same function.

Although volunteer firefighters are protected by the Volunteer Firefighters Benefit Law (VFBL) they could be seen as facing a greater loss than career firefighters if they sustain an injury in the line of duty. Volunteer firefighters face the same hazards as those working as career firefighters, the primary difference is that they must work an additional job to support themselves and provide for their dependents. If a volunteer

firefighter sustains a line of duty injury they could face a tremendous personal loss at their primary career.

Many volunteer firefighters are local college students who chose to serve their community while preparing to enter the workforce and begin their career; many with the hopes of working as career emergency responders. For these specific individuals a line of duty injury prior to entering the workforce could be detrimental to their future career as they will have to pass a rigorous medical and physical test for their intended future employment. In many affluent areas of the suburb surrounding New York City many volunteer firefighters earn a high income working in private industry. These individuals could suffer tremendous fiscal losses if they become incapacitated while serving their community.

The length of service for these firefighters ranged from two years to 13 years, with an average length of service of 8.23 years. Two of the firefighters have not yet earned a bachelor's degrees, three have earned bachelor degrees, two are working on graduate degrees, five have earned master's degrees and one has earned a professional doctorate. Ten work at the basic operations level and three work in mid-level management; but all respond to fire and emergency scenes, none are strictly administrative. Only one of the firefighters has children.

With regards to age all of the firefighters are either in their twenties or thirties. Eleven of which are in their twenties, and two are in their thirties. Three of the firefighters own their own home, four rent either a house or apartment, and six live in a

family member's home. Nine of the firefighters identify as Caucasian, one identifies as black, one identifies as Hispanic, none identify as Asian, and two identify as mixed-race.

### **Emergency Medical Responders**

Twelve of the emergency medical service responders are additionally firefighters, and one is solely an emergency medical responder. Two of the responders are females and ten are males. Five of the responders are or were paid career providers, two worked as both a volunteer and paid provider and five are strictly volunteer providers. Three of the responders work or have worked in New York City, and nine work or have worked in Nassau County, a county adjoining New York City. These responders work for eight different agencies. Four of the responders are still active and eight have recently departed from service. Nine of the responders interviewed are emergency medical technicians at the basic level, one is at the paramedic level, and two operate as ambulance drivers only.

The responders interviewed range in years of service from one year to 11 years. The average length of service for the responders interviewed is 5.45 years. Two of the responders work at the middle management level, and ten work as field or operations level responders. One of the emergency medical service providers is in the process of earning a bachelor's degree, three have bachelor's degrees, three are in the process of earning a master's degree, and five have a master's degree.

With regards to race, ten of the emergency medical responders identify as Caucasian and one identifies as Hispanic. None of the emergency medical responders in this sample group identifies as Black, Asian, or a mixed-race. Regarding age, ten of the emergency medical responders are in their twenties, and two are in their thirties. Four of

the emergency medical responders own their own homes, three rent, and four are currently residing in a family member's home.

### **Data Collection**

The data for this study was collected solely from in-person interviews with members of the culture group of emergency responders. The target population for this study was 30, being composed of ten emergency responders from each of the three subgroups of emergency responders. The study's final sample population was composed of ten law enforcement officers, 12 emergency medical service responders, and 13 firefighters. The population was composed of 24 individual responders as 11 of the firefighters in the sample group were additionally used in the emergency medical service sample group. This is because many of these responders act in a dual role as both firefighters and emergency medical responders.

Each participant was interviewed one time. The interviews took place from May 24, 2016 through June 12, 2016. The locations of the interviews differed depending on the preference of the study participant, but none of which occurred in their workplace. The interviews were audio recorded and I took hand notes during the interviews. After each interview I transcribed each interview. After the data analysis phase I contacted each of the study participants to allow them to member check my analysis. All of the participants positively accepted my analysis. There were no unusual incidents or occurrences during the data collection phase.

### **Data Analysis**

The data from the interviews was from the interviews and the notes recorded during the interviews and a spread sheet was created for each emergency responder subgroup. Creating these spread sheets eased data organization and display, which then eased data preliminary data analysis, as well as facilitated the emergence of common themes. Tables 1, 2 and 3 below show the general coded responses to the interview question.

Table 1

*Coded Responses to Interview Questions among Law Enforcement Officers*

Participant number									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Gender									
Male	Male	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male
Years of service									
5	2	8.5	4.5	30	1.5	4.5	3	5	4.5
Level of education (years past high school)									
2	4	4	5	7	4	4	4	4	4
Role									
BOL	BOL	BOL	BOL	MM	BOL	BOL	BOL	BOL	BOL
Do they have a perception of danger?									
Very hazardous	Very hazardous	Above average	Above average	Very hazardous	Above average	Very hazardous	Above average	Very hazardous	Very hazardous
Do they have any assets or liabilities?									
Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Do they have children?									
Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Do they have a perception of inadequate benefits, injustice, or inequity?									
Yes	Yes	Mixed perception	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Do they think that others have a perception of inadequate benefits, injustice, or inequity?									
Yes	Yes	Unsure	Yes	Yes	Unsure	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Does their perception impact the way in which they execute their duties?									
No	No	Sometimes	Somewhat	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Do they think that the perception of others impacts the execution of duties for others?									
No	No	Unsure	Yes	Yes	Unsure	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: BOL , base operations level; MM, middle management





Table 3

*Coded Responses to Interview Questions among Emergency Medical Responders*

Participant number											
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Gender (M = Male, F = Female)											
M	F	M	M	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M
Paid or volunteer (V = Volunteer, P = Paid, B = Both a volunteer and paid responder)											
P	V	P	P	B	P	B	P	V	V	V	V
Are they still active?											
No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Why did they leave?											
NE	BO	N/A	NE	NE	BO	NE	NE	NE	N/A	N/A	N/A
Years of service											
8	4	2.5	2	6	5	5	5	1	8	11	8
Level of service (P = Paramedic, E = EMT, D = Driver only)											
P	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	D	D	E
Level of education (years past high school)											
5	6	6	4	4	6	6	1	5	5	4	6
Role											
BOL	BOL	BOL	BOL	MM	BOL	MM	BOL	BOL	BOL	BOL	BOL
Do they have A perception of danger?											
Yes	Yes	High	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Low	Low	High
Do they have assets and liabilities?											
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Do they have children?											
No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Do they have a perception of inadequate benefits, injustice, or inequity?											
Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Do they think that others have A perception of inadequate benefits, injustice, or inequity?											
Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Mixed	No	Yes	Yes
Does their perception impact their duties?											
No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Does the perception of others impact the duties of others?											
No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No

Note: NE, not an equitable relationship; BO, burnout

### **Interview Questions**

Appendix B displays the data collection tool which was utilized for this study. It outlines each of the interview questions asked to each of the respondents, in the specific order in which they were asked. Each question was purposefully selected to obtain an in-depth response to pertinent questions related to the overall research questions.

The first interview question focused on the emergency responder as an individual. The goal of this question was to obtain demographic information related to the individual's background as an emergency responder. This question provided me with information regarding their role as an emergency responder, their length of service, and their rank. The second interview question focused on their personal demographic information such as level of education, family life, and other obligations such as liabilities and dependents. These two questions are relevant to understanding their personal variables.

The third interview question focused on the individual's perception of their situational variables. The third question asked about the benefits and compensation afforded to them, such as health coverage, job protection, disability benefits, sick time, and wages. The next questions also focused on their perception of situational variables such as the hazards in which they face and the perception they develop from such hazards.

The mixture of these questions which focused on the situational and personal variables which are components of these responder's lives allowed me to develop an

understanding of the responder's perception of work equity and justice. I then verbalized their developed perception to the responder to see if they felt as if this perception is accurate. I then asked a second set of questions. These questions focused on the responder's developed perception of other responders and if they believe that others share their perception. These questions also focused on how this developed perception impacts their duties, as well as the duties of others within their culture group. Each of these questions were essential to answer the research questions.

### **Perception of Danger**

It was found that all of the law enforcement officers found their job to be hazardous or very hazardous. Seven emergency medical responders stated that they find their job hazardous or very hazardous, and five stated that their duties can be hazardous at times or that they would consider their occupation to have a low hazard level. Variables such as role, level of service, and years of service did not seem to impact an emergency medical responder's perception of danger. The division between paid versus volunteer responders was randomly mixed in this category as well; as was it between those that are still active and those that have recently departed service. One responder who is both an emergency medical technician and firefighter stated that "with regards to EMS I think it would be rare to sustain a life threatening injury like with the fire service or law enforcement, but in comparison to those fields it is much more common to sustain a career ending injury."

Eleven of the 13 firefighters interviewed stated that they find their duties hazardous and two stated that they find their duties somewhat hazardous. Both of the firefighters who stated that they find their duties somewhat hazardous have similar

demographics as both are males, are still active, have more than five years of service, are basic operations level staff and do not have any children or other assets or liabilities. This similar demographic can also be seen among firefighters who did report their perception of work related hazards to be high.

### **Law Enforcement Officers Perception of Equity and Justice**

Seven of the law enforcement officers stated that they do not think that their benefits are fair or equitable compared to the tasks and duties which they are assigned. One officer stated that they have mixed feelings as to the fairness and equity of their compensation. Two of the officers stated that they think the pay and benefits are fair, however one of those officers did state that they have acquired their own private disability insurance. He believes he needs this coverage because he would not be able to maintain his quality of life if he ever sustained a line of duty injury because he is reliant on a side job and overtime which he would not get if he were injured. He does however feel as if his medical expenses would be covered and he would still receive his base pay.

The two officers that stated that they believe their relationship with the city is fair and equitable share common themes with each other. Both are males at the basic operations level who believe that their job is very hazardous. Both have bachelor's degrees and have less than five years of service. Neither have children, but both have assets and liabilities which they are responsible for. The two officers also stated that they believe that others feel as if their job is not fair or equitable. Two other officers stated that they are not sure how others feel. All of the remaining officers stated that they believe

that others in the same field are dissatisfied with their benefits and compensation and feel as if there is an inequitable and unfair relationship.

Four officers stated that their perception of inequity and injustice does impact the way in which they execute their duties. Two officers stated that their perception does somewhat or sometimes impact the way they perform their duties. Four officers stated that their perception, although negative, does not impact the way in which they carry out their duties. Of the officers who stated that their duties are not impacted by their perception in-depth responses included statements such as “I knew what kind of career field I was getting into” and “we don’t do it for the money or benefits, we do it because we want to help.”

### **Firefighters Perception of Equity and Justice**

Ten of the thirteen firefighters are still active. One of those that have departed from service cited an inequitable relationship as his reason for leaving, the two others stated that they had to leave because they moved, as they could no longer afford to live in the area where they grew up. Two of the 13 firefighters stated that they do not find the benefits provided to be unjust, and three stated that they have mixed feelings on the topic. The remaining firefighters stated that they believe that they should be entitled to higher levels of coverage, one stated that he had to obtain his own private disability insurance in case he sustained an injury while working as a firefighter. Of the two firefighters that stated that they are not dissatisfied with their level of coverage provided by the fire department, both are males, still active, and neither has children; aside from these

variables the two emergency responders do not have any other common variables as their years of service, assets and liabilities, and level of formal education differ.

One of the two firefighters who stated that they are not dissatisfied with their coverage stated that they believe that others are satisfied with their coverage and the other stated that he believes that others are not satisfied with their coverage. One firefighter who has mixed feelings stated that they do not believe others feel that there is an unjust or inequitable relationship with the department and their benefits.

Only two of the firefighters who believe that their coverage is unjust and inequitable believe that it impacts the way in which they execute their duties. These firefighters have different attributes, as one is a male at the middle management level with 11 years of service, and the other is a female at the operations level with two years of service. No other firefighters believe that their duties are impacted by the quality of benefits which are provided to them. Three firefighters stated that they believe that the duties performed by others are impacted by the level of coverage that they are provided with and the rest stated that they do not believe that others are impacted by their level of coverage.

### **Emergency Medical Responders Perception of Equity and Justice**

Of the emergency medical service responders interviewed only two stated that they believe that the benefits and compensation provided are fair and equitable. Of those two, one was a professional paid responder and the other is a volunteer. The volunteer responder is not an emergency medical technician at any level, but is only a driver. The

other responder is no longer active but was a full time paid responder. He stated that he left the field because he desired higher pay. He was only active for two years.

Those two responders are also the only two who stated that they feel as if others have an equitable and just perception of their compensation and coverage. One other responder stated that they have a mixed view. That responder is volunteer responder with one year of service. The remaining responders all stated that they believe the perception of other emergency medical responders is one of inequity and injustice.

Five of the emergency responders stated that their developed perception of injustice and inequity does have an impact on their job function and execution of their duties. Of these individuals, only one is still an active emergency responder and the rest have left the field. Two of those that left cited their reason for leaving as burnout and the other two cited a perception of an inequitable work relationship. Each of the five responders has a varying number of years of service and are split between volunteer and paid responders, but are all emergency medical technicians at the basic level and hold the same job role. Four of the five responders who stated that their job function is impacted by their perception have graduate level degrees. The rest of the responders stated that their perception does not impact the execution of their duties. One of the responders who stated that their perception does not impact their duties specifically stated that if there were to be any reduction in benefits or coverage that it could impact the execution of their duties.

Each of the responders who stated that their job function is impacted by their perception also stated that they believe that others in the same field are also commonly

impacted by a similar perception. One responder specifically stated “I think people do the best they can with what they are given and it does impact their duties.” One responder who stated that their duties are not impacted by their perception stated that they believe that others in the field are. The remaining responders stated that they do not believe that others in the same field are impacted by their perception of equity and justice with regards to their benefits, compensation and coverage.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

The research took active and passive steps to ensure credibility and validity throughout the data collection and analysis phase of this research. I conducted each of the interviews in a comfortable setting for the study subject which allowed them to be more open and honest. The study subjects knew that the data would be kept anonymous, which additionally allowed for them to be open and honest during the interviews. I utilized a member checking strategy after the data was collected and analyzed. This strategy was implemented by the researcher. I contacted each study subject and reviewed the implications and understanding which I developed through the interview with that specific study subject to confirm accuracy. I received an affirmative confirmation of accuracy from each of the study subjects. Consistency was ensured throughout the data collection process as I maintained the same research steps, questions, and organization throughout the entire process.

The results of this study will have a degree of transferability as a relatively large sample size was utilized for this qualitative study; however there will be some limitations to the transferability of the study. The study focused on a specific culture group in a



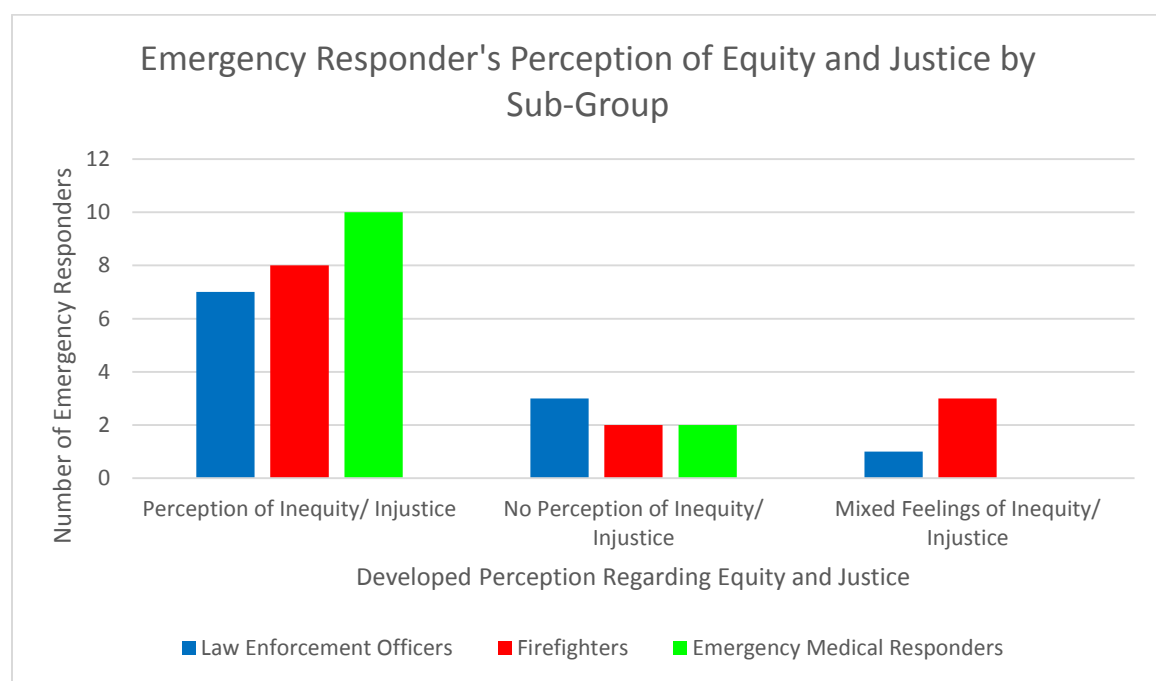
specific geographic area. Although culture groups of emergency responders can be found throughout the entire nation and globe, this study focused on those within the New York Metropolitan Area. Due to this focus, the data will be impacted on subject factors specific to members of the culture group studied in this geographic area.

## **Results**

This study was focused on two research questions. The first being, what is the relationship between the benefits and compensation afforded to emergency responders and their perception of work equity, equality, justice, and risk management? The second research question was, how does the perception of equity, equality, justice, and risk management impact the execution of an emergency responder's duties?

The analyzed research data suggests that based on the current benefits and compensation which is afforded to emergency responders there is a perception of work inequity and injustice. This is supported by the data displayed in figure 3 that shows over 75 percent of the sample population stated that they have developed a perception of inequity and injustice in their workplace specifically related to the benefits, coverage, and compensation which is provided to them by their employer. All of those in the sample population stated that they regularly experience a perception of danger while at work. Only six reported a low perception of danger, however did acknowledge a conscious and present hazard. Responses from these emergency responders when asked about the perception which they have developed through their lived experiences as members of the emergency responder culture group included statements such as "the coverage provided is not compatible to the tasks that we are expected to perform," "if I got hurt in the line of

duty I would be provided with a degree of coverage, however I cannot maintain current quality of life without being able to work overtime which I would not be able to do if I sustained an injury,” “I am dependent on the income from my side job to support my family. If I got hurt while working as a police officer I would still receive my salary there but would lose my secondary income which I need,” “everyone on this job needs supplemental income which they would not get if they got hurt,” “I have to pay out of pocket for private disability insurance in case I get hurt on the job.”

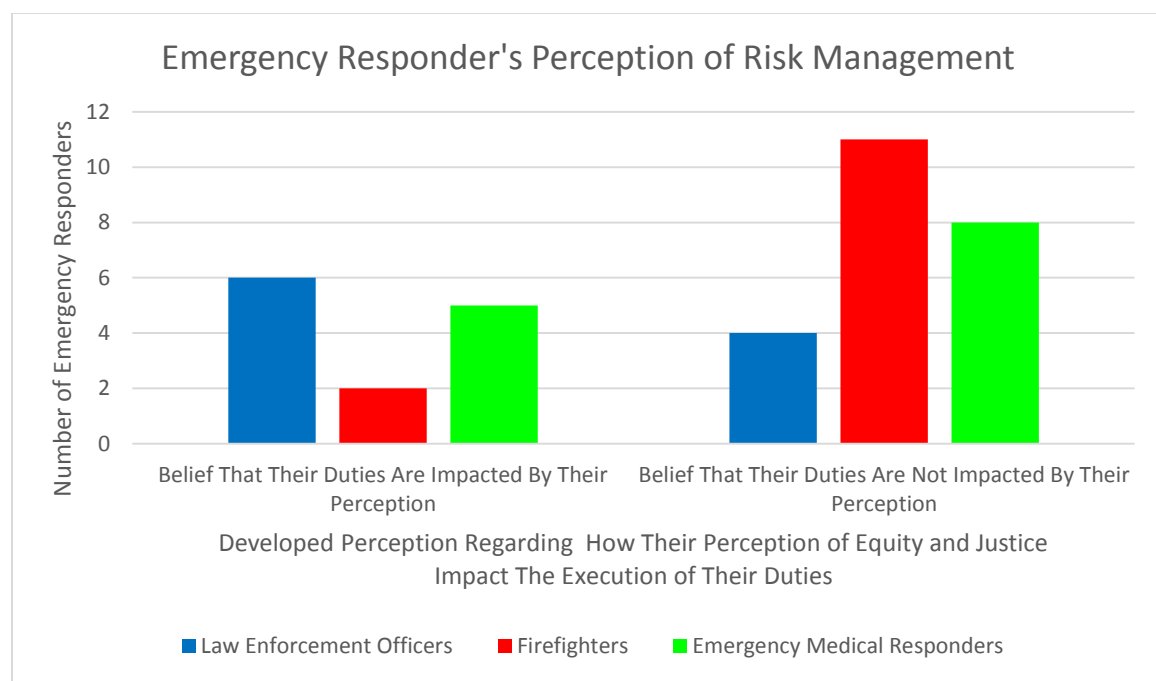


*Figure 3: Emergency responder's perception of equity and justice by sub-group*

Although a relationship between the benefits and compensation provided to emergency responders and their perception of equity and justice was discovered there was no significant relationship found between these benefits and perception of equality. Only one member of the sample population stated “emergency responders working for

other municipalities throughout the state make much more money than us and get better benefits. They can retire earlier and receive other fringe benefits which we do not get.”

A relationship was found between these benefits and the perception of risk management of specific subgroups of emergency responders. This relationship is depicted in figure 4. Only two of the 11 firefighters stated that they believe that their duties are impacted by their perception of inadequate benefits and coverage provided by their employer, however six of the ten law enforcement officers and five of the 13 emergency medical responders stated that the execution of their work duties are impacted by their perception.



*Figure 4: Emergency responder's perception of risk management*

There were some outliers who indicated that they have a positive perception of work equity and justice. One respondent stated “I believe the job is extremely dangerous,

but it is an accepted component of my life and if anything happened I would be covered. I have assets that I need to maintain so I obtained my own disability insurance to cover the extras incase anything happens.”

Regarding the second research question, the perception of equity, equality, justice, and risk management was reported to have an impact on the execution of 12 out of the 24 members of the sample population. When assessing the specific impact in which the developed perception has on each individual there was some degree of variance. Subgroups of emergency responders appeared to differ from each other. Firefighters reported their perception to have a lower impact on their work duties than did law enforcement officers and emergency medical responders. A few respondents stated “when we’re working we just focus on the job at hand and don’t think about anything else,” and “the danger is there but you can’t let it affect you.”

When asked about the impact that their perception of inequity and injustice has on their work duties some respondents stated “we always have to make sure that we are number one and always go home,” “unless I know that there is an actual and immediate life threat I will not put myself in danger,” “most guys don’t think about it, but everyone knows there is a high risk of injury every day so you do the job the best you can,” “I’m just a volunteer, my income potential at my job will never be met by any coverage here.”

### **Summary**

This research study found a relationship between the benefits and compensation afforded to emergency responders and their perception of work equity, justice, and risk management. No significant relationship was found between the benefits and

compensation afforded to emergency responders and their perception of equality. The impact that the perception of these variables has on emergency responders was found to vary by individual and by subgroup of emergency responder. Law enforcement officers and emergency medical responders were found to be impacted greater by their perceptions than were firefighters. There is no qualitative measure for proactivity but half of those interviewed self-reported a noticed impact on their job function, as well as with their peers.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

### **Introduction**

This qualitative study was designed to develop an understanding of the perception developed by emergency responders regarding the compensation and benefits provided to them. The study specifically examined the perceptions developed regarding work equity, justice, equality, and risk management. The study found a relationship between the benefits, coverage, and compensation provided to emergency responders and their perception of work equity, justice, and risk management; however, no relationship was found between this and their perception of equality.

This study also sought to examine if the developed perceptions of these situational variables has an impact on the execution of the duties assigned to members of this specific culture group, and if so what the impact is. Half of those in the sample population reported an impact between their perception of work equity and justice and the execution of their duties. This impact was found to vary by individual and by subgroup of emergency responder.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The data obtained through this study confirm and extend information in the knowledge base within this field. Examining emergency responders as a general culture group has been done; however, most often subgroups of emergency responders as examined as a culture group rather than general emergency responders as a broader group. This data confirms that subgroups of emergency do share many accepted values with other subgroups of emergency responders. For example, law enforcement officers

and emergency medical responders were found to have similar perceptions of work equity.

The effects of occupational challenges on emergency responders has been assessed many times in the past, however no research was found on the effects of the perception of danger, compensation, and work benefits on emergency responders. The data from this research will extend the knowledge base in that area.

This study also adds to the knowledge base regarding the two theories in which the framework for this study was based on. Following these theories personal variables such as dependents, level of education, assets, and liabilities should have all been relevant factors in determining the perception developed by the individuals within this culture group. The data in this study did not suggest a significant relationship between these variables and the perception of work equity of those within the sample population.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study was limited with regards to transferability due to the sample size which was possible for the study compared to the actual population of this culture group. The sample size was large enough to develop a degree of generalizability, however there is limitation. Dependability is an unavoidable limitation when dealing with studies involving perception as perceptions evolve over time. This is especially true at the time of data collection due to the state of contractual agreements between New York City and the emergency service labor unions.

### **Recommendations**

A similar study could be conducted in the same geographic area utilizing quantitative methods. A different study utilizing a different method would obtain less in-depth responses, however could create a greater level of generalizability. This type of study could also provide additional information regarding the similarities and differences between the developed perceptions of members of different subgroups of emergency responders. Additionally, further research should be conducted in different geographic areas to assess the transferability of this current study, as well as to gain greater insight into the culture group of emergency responders.

### **Implications**

Any shift in the benefits, compensation, and coverage provided to emergency responders would have social change implications at individual, family, and organizational level. Change with regards to these benefits would impact individual emergency responders and their families as the data currently suggests a significant perception of inadequacy. This information could be utilized to support a push for different pilot programs which could be implemented to assess the impact of a change or enhancement of the current system.

The implementation of this type of change could boost morale within the culture group, enhance city-union relations, and re-develop the perceptions of emergency responders with regards to work equity, justice, and risk management. These developed perceptions were found to have an impact on the duties performed by emergency responders. An enhancement in these developed perceptions could have societal



implications as the critical functions provided by members of the emergency response culture group are essential to maintaining public safety.

### **Conclusion**

Every community in the United States is dependent on its local emergency responders to ensure public safety. Individuals who work in emergency response are members of a unique culture group who face many dangers and hazards. To mitigate these hazards, emergency responders are provided with certain benefits and compensation which this research has shown to be widely viewed as inadequate. This view has led to a developed perception of injustice and inequity in the workplace, which has additionally been shown to have an impact in the execution of duties. Ensuring that these individuals are provided with the means to proactively carryout their necessary function is critical to society. Any change in this field will have social implications at the individual, family, and community level.

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## Appendix A: Invitation to Participate

Hello,

I am conducting a study regarding emergency responders, and am looking for study participants. If you are interested in participating please contact me for further information. If you choose to participate there will be a one time, one on one interview that will take approximately 30 minutes.

Thank you,

Derek A. Skuzenski



## Appendix B: Interview Questions

I will begin with the following questions:

- Tell me about your role as an emergency responder
  - How many years of service do you have? What rank do you hold and have you held? What is your level of education?
- Do you have any assets or liabilities that may affect your work duties, function, or perception of such?
  - Examples include family, outstanding debt
- Can you tell me about the benefits and compensation that is afforded to you?
  - Such as health coverage, job protection, disability benefits, sick time, wages
- How hazardous to your health and quality of life is your occupation, and do you feel as if the benefits and compensation effectively mitigate these hazards?
- How would any line of duty incident effect your assets, liabilities and quality of life?
- Do you feel as if emergency responders in your role should be provided any additional benefits or compensation, if so please explain what type of additions should be made, and why?

Based on the before mentioned questions I should be able to assess the individual's demographics, personal variables, situational variables, and their perception of work equity and justice.

I will verbalize the perception which was developed, and ask them if they believe that it is accurate. I will then ask the following questions:

- What are the greatest contributing factors which led to the development of this perception?
- Based on your lived experiences as a member of the general culture group of emergency responders do you believe that this is a widespread perception?
- Do you believe that this perception has an impact on the execution of the duties of emergency responders in general?

## Curriculum Vitae

**Derek A. Skuzenski**

### **Professional Summary**

An emergency responder with ten years of experience, who has worked in a wide-variety of roles within the emergency response system. Extensive active experience in law enforcement, fire service operations, emergency medical response operations, as well as administration, management and leadership.

### **Professional Experience**

#### **New York City Sheriff's Office:**

Lieutenant: Kings County Law Enforcement Bureau Night Operations

August 2016 – Current

Commanding officer of night operations for the borough of Brooklyn.

While serving as a sworn New York State law enforcement officer responsibilities including the administrative and field supervision of deputy sheriffs.

Deputy Sheriff: Kings County Law Enforcement Bureau

February 2013 – Current

Served as a certified and sworn New York State law enforcement officer who enforces criminal, civil, traffic and other various laws in the borough of Brooklyn. Primary duties included routine patrol, executing evictions,

enforcing domestic violence orders, serving legal process, enforcing judgments and other court orders, seizing property, conducting arrest warrants and transporting prisoners.

Deputy Sheriff: Field Support Unit

April 2014 – Current

On call to respond to citywide special operations and emergency situations, which require advanced weapons, equipment or tactics.

### **Roslyn Highlands Fire Department**

Captain: Division of Emergency Medical Services

January 2012 – Current

Responsible for overseeing the EMS department and personnel for the department consisting of 120 emergency responders. Liaison between the agency and the Department of Health, medical director, and Regional EMS Council. Responsible for ensuring personnel training and for managing the division's budget.

Firefighter/ EMT: Fire and EMS operations

March 2007 – Current

Responds to various types of emergency situations to resolve any threats to public safety including but not limited to fires, motor vehicle accidents, hazardous material spills and leaks, and emergency medical incidents.

Lieutenant: Division of Emergency Medical Services

January 2011 – January 2012

Responsible for field supervision of emergency medical responders.

Corresponding Secretary: Administration

January 2010 – January 2011

Responsible for maintaining positive media relations while appointed as the public information officer. This was achieved by writing press releases and acting as a media correspondent on behalf of the fire department.

Motor Chief: Fire Operations

January 2009 – January 2010

Responsible for conducting regular apparatus and equipment inspections.

### **Long Island University Department of Public Safety**

Emergency Medical Technician: EMS

April 2010 – May 2012

Responsible for responding to emergency situations on campus and providing basic life support and transport services.

### **Long Island University Department of Criminal Justice**

Graduate Teaching Assistant: Chairman's Office

September 2011 – May 2012

Assisted the department chairman, Dr. Harvey Kushner with office, administrative and classroom duties. Assisted students with information and questions, proctored exams and coordinated internships.

### **Awards**

Nassau County Fire Commission Unit Citation for special rescue efforts for a trapped person in December, 2009

Nassau County Legislative Citation for special rescue efforts for a trapped person in December, 2009

Town of North Hempstead Citation for special rescue efforts for a trapped person in December, 2009

Nassau County Fire Citation for emergency response during Hurricane Sandy in October, 2012

New York City Sheriff's Department Special Citation for duties performed while on a special assignment at the United Nations General Assembly in October, 2013

New York City Sheriff's Department Unit Citations for actions performed while on a special assignment at the United Nations General Assembly in October, 2013

New York City Sheriff's Department Unit Citation for recognized duty in February 2016

### **Professional Certifications**

New York State Municipal Police Training Council:

Basic Course for Peace Officers

Initial Course in Firearms and Deadly Physical Force

Nassau County Fire Service Academy:

Essentials of Firefighting

Primaries of Firefighting

Ropes I

Strategies & Tactics

Department Operations

Utility Emergencies

Confined Space Awareness

Introduction to Fire Officer

Fire Police

Fire Ground Communications

Hazardous Materials Operations

Vehicle Extrication

Nassau County Emergency Medical Service Academy

Emergency Medical Technician

CPR: Health Care Provider

FEMA Emergency Management Institute:

Emergency Management Professional Development Series Certificate

IS-1

IS-8

IS-15.B

IS-42

IS-75

IS-100

IS-120.A

IS-200.A

IS-208.A

IS-230.B

IS-235.B

IS-240.A

IS-241.A

IS-242.A

IS-244.A

IS-279

IS-321

IS-393.A

IS-520

IS-546.12

IS-632.B

IS-700

IS-800.B

IS-801

IS-802

IS-803

IS-804

IS-805

IS-806

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IS-808

IS-808

IS-809

IS-810

IS-813

IS-814

IS-906

IS-907

IS-908

#### United States National Fire Academy

Fire Service Supervision

Emergency Response to Terrorism

Strategy and Tactics

Fire Fighter Safety

Community Safety Educator

Alternative Water Supply: Planning and Implementing Programs

Foundational Concepts of Chemistry

Testing and Evaluation of Water Supplies for Fire Protection

ICS Simulation Series Dorm Hall Fire

ICS Simulation Series Manson Fire

ICS Simulation Series Ranch House Fire



ICS Simulation Series Wild Land Fire

ICS Simulation Series Town House Fire

ICS Simulation Series Strip Mall Hostage/Arson Fire

ICS Simulation Series Nursing Home Fire

### **Education**

Walden University	2016
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Doctor of Philosophy: Public Policy & Administration:

Emergency Management

Long Island University	2012
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Master of Science: Criminal Justice

Long Island University	2011
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Bachelor of Arts: Criminal Justice

Nassau Community College	2009
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Associate of Science: Criminal Justice

### **Publications**

Skuzenski, D. (2016, March 29). Overregulation, opportunity, and corruption. *PA Times*.

Skuzenski, D. (2016, June). Emergency responders and the Ebola epidemic. *ELK Asia*

*Pacific Journal of Social Science*. 2 (3). doi: 10.16962/EAPJSS/issn.2394-

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