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There are always two sides to policy: Police use of deadly force

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Abstract

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Jana N. Cole

M.S., Nova Southeastern University, 2005

B.S., South College, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study examined the policy-specific, perceptional, and conceptual knowledge that citizens have regarding policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters to gain a greater understanding of how media, social media, and community leaders impact this public knowledge. This study provided insight into the public's policy-specific knowledge and perceptions about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force incidents filling the gap within the existing police use of force literature. Bittner's theory on policing, constructionism of reality, and the exemplification theory were used in a unique conceptual framework to understand this phenomenon. Interviews were conducted with 19 members of the public. Data were analyzed using Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological process and AQUAD 7 qualitative software. Five themes emerged related to influences of public knowledge, and 2 themes related to the impact media, social media, and community leaders have on public knowledge about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters. Recommendations are addressed for policing agencies to implement educational programs about policing policies for the public regarding use of force. Study findings could be used by policy makers to improve transparency and legitimacy issues between police and the public.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family and my children, Jahniya, Bryce and Devin. May this forever be a significant remembrance of uncertainties in life, to give each one of you the courage to strive for success even when the odds appear to be against you. Let this be a lifelong reminder that the knowledge you have already obtained, can always be renewed in making the proper choices in all you do in life.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the members of my doctoral committee, Dr. Stallo and Dr. Alexander for your educational guidance throughout this entire process. Also, thank you to my family and friends for your continued support and encouragement over the years to accomplish this educational milestone.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to the Study

The authority that police have regarding use of force against citizens granted to

them by federal and state governments in the United States are perhaps the most

misunderstood and misinterpreted policing policies in the purview of the American

public. Authorization for police officers to use force is often justified by legal and

professional standards, societal expectations, and morally appropriate conduct (Gerber &

Jackson, 2017). Police use of force policies, including those involving deadly force, have

for decades drawn much criticism from the American public, as well as various United

States (U.S.) community leaders. Law enforcement receives substantial scrutiny from the

media, American public, and community leaders when use of force tactics are employed

to protect themselves or the public, and policing are often examined thoroughly after

incidents.

Most police work is generally done outside the purview of the public. Police-

citizen encounters that involve any type of police use of force are often reported by media

outlets, which can cause a loss of public trust in the police (Rojek, Alpert, & Smith,

2012). There has been little criminological or psychological research conducted that

attempts to understand or provide reasons why the public accepts or disapproves of

justifications for police use of force. Those negative perceptions of the police, presented

in the media, by social media, and voiced by community leaders can damage the public

ideology of the legitimacy of policing. Damaging influences on police legitimacy creates

a lack of reliability and trust in police, leading to the reduction of public safety and increasing crime rates within communities.

Breakdowns in policing legitimacy often provoke a backlash against current policing policies and broaden negative attitudes of potential special interest groups that are intent on threatening the safety of officers and their families, as seen in recent years with the ambush killings of police officers (Campbell, et al., 2018; Willits & Nowacki, 2014). When the public has contact with police, officer conduct affects public trust and confidence. In adding to the existing police use of force research, this study examines the knowledge Palm Beach County, Florida citizens have about police use of force policies, focusing on deadly force. This paper will also address possible influences that the media and community leaders have in altering or misconstruing citizen's understanding on current use-of-force policies.

Background of the Study

According to Klahm and Tillyer (2010), "the phrase 'police use of force' has had a negative connotation that implies cruel, harsh, or brutal treatment" (p. 230). Some criminological researchers suggest that this simple phrase can erode public trust. This erosion of public trust and legitimacy of police limits the policing agency in their capacity to protective the public because, the public may view appropriate force by police as excessive (Gerber and Jackson, 2017). The citizens receive their knowledge regarding use of force policies through current mass media messages, news events, and viral social media videos exhibiting shooting incidents involving police. When these public encounters with police escalate into physical force, they often result in fights for survival

for each participant, where there are no rules for citizens and typically higher

expectations and rules for officers (Gerber & Jackson, 2017; Rojek et al., 2012). When

the public doesn't consider all the dynamics of these police-citizen encounters, this can

be a major misinterpretation, especially when relying on media interpretations of events.

Police have specific regulations and administrative policies that guide them

during decision-making processes involving the escalation of force in police-citizen

encounters (Lee & Vaugh, 2010; Worden & McLean, 2016). Highly escalated incidents

between citizens and the police are considered by some of the American public as

negative contacts. These incidents often take place in subgroups within America in

communities with lesser wealth than other communities and where questions of police

legitimacy are attached to distrust of both the officer and the policing agencies they

represent (Gerber & Jackson, 2017; Rojek, et al., 2012; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). Those

contacts are often highlighted by anti-police reformists, advocacy groups, and some

political leaders who support enhanced civil liabilities and police reform of policing

policies, such as police use of force.

When officers or citizens fail to understand or accept each other's roles in these

incidents, breakdowns in communication and an escalation in behavior lead to various

accounts or perceptions of these police-citizen interactions (Gerber & Jackson, 2017; Lee

& Vaugh, 2012). Brown and Benedict (2002) denoted that, public mistrust can be

followed by negative attitudes against police and their policing actions by citizens',

which can often be attributed to perceptions of racial bias. The American public's

perceptions, reactions, and knowledge about police use of deadly force are often acquired

through media reports that lack in substantial information about the encounters and use language to captivate audiences.

According to Willits and Nowacki (2013), "in the absence of a cooperative and supportive relationship with citizens, police work becomes more difficult, with a greater level of uncertainty often characterized by hostile encounters with citizens" (p. 64). Due to uncertain and forced citizen-police relationships, police are constantly under scrutiny for everything they say and do, including their decision-making. Goldsmith, 2005 explains that, if American public trust of police is eroded then law enforcement will have to make reformative changes to agency procedures or policies, making them less proactive within their communities. Those reforms could result in police acting only by public consent, which is also known as depolicing, making police work more difficult when investigating and solving crimes, resulting in decreased public safety for citizens (Campbell et al., 2018; Goldsmith, 2005). Without a cooperative relationship between U.S. citizens and the police, policing only by public consent could consequently lead to safety concerns for both police and the American public.

Worden and McLean (2017) found that, "procedural injustice has substantially greater negative effects on U.S. citizens' judgements, than positive effects" (p. 33). Officer behavior during police-citizen encounters appears to have minimal effects on citizens' judgements and satisfaction with police. Although many police agencies in the U.S. have improved performance to better serve the public, confidence and trust for law enforcement has remained unchanged (Worden & McLean, 2017). Rojek et al. (2012) found that media depictions of police shooting incidents often resonated with

citizens, especially when they were repeatedly broadcasted by media networks to receptive audiences. Consequently, these depictions also produce biased perceptions encouraging disconnects between the community and police (Rojek et al., 2012). Citizen-police encounters, specifically those that escalate into heightened exchanges, are highly complex and produce a variety of convoluted dynamics when force is used by police.

The procedural justice model for officers is long. The management within policing agencies that implement these models are generally short on explanation when it comes to its enforcement, promoting officer discretion when making decisions on the beat (Worden & McLean, 2017). However, various situations encountered by officers typically cannot be defined under a basic continuum model. The continuum model is used in policing agencies across the U.S. and refers to the officer's level of perception verses an officer's response, including use of deadly force, when it comes to individuals they encounter during their daily duties on the streets. Where officers are involved in use of force encounters, they are held to a general standard of legal reasonableness by the United States Civil Rights Commission and U.S. judicial system, which determines whether the officer used reasonable or excessive force. These standards define how and when officers are permitted to use reasonable force and when they are permitted some flexibility in terms of errors of judgment when faced with use of force conditions that reflect a high degree of mental or physical stress (Alpert & Smith, 1994).

Problem Statement

Law enforcement officers are authorized to use coercive force according the continuum when reasonably necessary during police-citizen encounters, when citizens are

not complying with authoritative commands given by an officer (Gerber & Jackson, 2017; Rojek et al., 2012). Currently, there is a need in the U.S. to further examine the American public's understanding of policing policies regarding deadly force encounters, to fully understand the context of these social interactions. This research will help develop an understanding about the public's knowledge about policing policies, and examine any possible influences that the media, social media, or public leaders have on citizens within Palm Beach County, Florida.

According to Campbell, et al., 2018 and Zillmann, 2006, the overzealous use of exemplification by media, social media, and community leaders, after a deadly force incident occurs may negatively impact citizen-police relations. When images of police-citizen encounters are exemplified by media, and repetitively replayed to the public on social media, and publicly criticized by community leaders, it can hinder the positive crime-fighting relationship between citizen and police. Media platforms that depict negative imagery about police, and police use of force, are negatively debated by American public audiences with little to no explanations about policing policy.

Currently, there is a great deal of public debate about policing policy in the U.S. over the visual imagery of police use of force, produced by media. Unfortunately, these fluid debates lack in demonstrating any specific flaws within the policing policy itself. These debates, by a presumably uninformed American public on policing policy, have led to dangerous backlash toward law enforcement and their families, including the recent rash of retaliatory ambush killings of police officers. Policing policies on police use of force and deadly force continue to be debated among the American public, with no real

potential remedies for criminal justice reform. Kalhm and Tillyer (2010) explained that, the lack of public knowledge by Americans about policing policies may be due to the failure of law enforcement agencies to make those policies publicly available to their communities served.

Campbell, et al. (2018) argued that, in recent years officers have disproportionately used excessive, and deadly, force more frequently than in previous years and are perceived by the American public as doing so with disregard to their agencies force policies. There are several notable conflicts that should be of interest and concern to future researchers who examine controversies involving police use of deadly force, especially public concerns over policing policies. Miller (2015) stated that the psychological attitudes, behaviors, or personal traits of officers were critical in analyzing how or why officers deploy deadly force. Whereas, Klinger (2008) and Terrill, et.al. (2012) explained that, in use of force studies it is important to examine the conflicts of force options or actions in comparison to a citizen's demographic or geographical variables. The public's knowledge and understanding of policing policies, their perceptions about use of deadly force, and mitigating factors that may influence their knowledge and perceptions has not been examined in depth within police use of force literature.

The historic literature on police use of force doesn't thoroughly examine the post incident phenomena that is related to police use of deadly force. This phenomenon coincides with the public analysis of these police-citizen encounters after they occur, and how social psychological factors play a role in the public's escalation in quickly

delegitimize those force encounters. With the absence of a social psychological explanation in police use of force studies there is a gap of misunderstanding about police-citizen encounters of force, which gives the American public opacity on police reforms. Additionally, there is a nonexistence exploration in the literature concerning the agencies that hinder the ability of the American public to obtain police use of force policies from their policing agency after a police-citizen encounter occurred. There are an overwhelming number of policing agencies across the U.S. that don't make these policies available for the American public to view. There is still a great deal to be explored in the area of police use of force studies such as the American public's understanding of policing policies, what leads the public to delegitimize policing organizations after police-citizen encounters of force occur, and what influences public perceptions after a police use of deadly force transpire.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to examine the policy-specific, perceptional, and conceptual knowledge that citizens have about policing policies and police-citizen encounters involving deadly force. To gain a better understanding of the influences media, social media, or community leaders have on the knowledge citizens have about police use of force policies within Palm Beach County, Florida, to have a better understanding of public knowledge and perceptions regarding policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters. Furthermore, this study will define the influential role the media, social media, and community leaders have on the public's perceptions, providing a basis for future researchers, that have an interest in

assessing public perceptions or knowledge about police-citizen encounters of deadly

force or policing policy in the future.

In this study, an assessment of the citizens of Palm Beach County, Florida's

knowledge about police use of force policies were conducted through a two-step process

consisting of an initial interview with individuals using an open-ended questionnaire

format that were presented to participants and then collected for data analysis. The next

process assessed whether the media, social media, or community leaders influenced

citizens policy-specific, perceptional, or conceptual knowledge about police-citizen

encounters of deadly force and policing policies. The researcher showed short video clips

of police-citizen deadly force encounters and then provided secondary questionnaires

with multiple choice responses to compare to the initial open-ended questionnaires and

interviews. This assisted the researcher to assess any changes in citizen's perceptional or

conceptual knowledge about policing policies and police use of force actions. The

researcher conducted this two-step process during interviews with each participant.

For this study, it was best to use the phenomenological approach, allowing for an

in-depth and contextually-defined focus on various types of mitigating factors that

influence Palm Beach County participants' perceptions or knowledge, as it relates to

current organizational policing policies and police-citizen encounters involving deadly

force. This type of approach assisted in clarifying both textual and structural descriptions

provided to the researcher by participants. The qualitative phenomenological approach

was also helpful to adding descriptive context to social-psychological factors. This

includes the policy-specific knowledge versus citizens' conceptual knowledge to attain a

better understanding of factors that influence the knowledge associated with policing policies and police-citizen encounters of deadly force.

The methodological design in this study assisted to provide a better comprehension to future researchers, of the differing influential factors that contribute to the public's knowledge about policing policies and police-citizen encounters of deadly force. It is necessary to understand citizens knowledge and perceptions about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters. To determine whether citizens truly comprehend or is knowledgeable about policing policies or whether these publicly-formed opinions about police force actions are constructed based on other influential factors. Understanding public knowledge and perceptions could be critical to the enhancement of legitimacy of police and policing agencies and beneficial in repairing the currently fractured status of police-citizen relations within Palm Beach County communities.

Research Questions

RQ1: What is citizen's understanding regarding police use of force policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters?

RQ2: What type of influence, if any, does news media have on citizen's perceptions and knowledge regarding policing policies or police-citizen deadly force incidents?

RQ3: Do use-of-force, post incident opinions from the media or community leaders regarding deadly force by police, impact citizen's perceptions of use of force policies?

Nature of the Study

This study will examine police use of force policies that allow officers in certain situations to use deadly force when in the field. The primary focus of this study is to examine public perceptions about deadly force actions undertaken by police using force policies to gain a better understanding of influences such as the media, social media, or community leaders that may affect public perceptions regarding policing policies and police actions. Furthermore, this study will also consider whether other mitigating factors, such as family, friends, or coworkers may have an impact on citizens' conceptual knowledge, specific knowledge, or perceptions about police use of force policies as they relate to deadly force.

Data were examined in-depth to determine how citizens' knowledge about police use of force policies differ, and whether there are any patterns of commonalities among participant responses. To obtain a rich and in-depth description of the phenomenon, a phenomenological method of analysis was used in conjunction with a conceptual framework guided by social constructionism theory (Berger & Luckman, 1996), exemplification theory (Zillmann, 1999), and Bittner's theory on policing (Bittner, 1970). This framework employed a philosophical assumption to ontological inquiry to understand the multiple realities of differing perspectives and lived experiences during the data collection process. This type of phenomenological design is appropriate for gathering and understanding information-rich data from a smaller number of participants and requires the researcher to have extensive and prolonged interactions with individuals to develop patterns and meanings of relationships (Creswell, 2009).

Quantitative or mixed methods approaches are not appropriate for this study because it would not provide the information-rich and in-depth analysis that this study requires. Due to the complexity of social-psychological behaviors involved, participants knowledge about police-citizen encounters of deadly force, participants comprehension of policing policies, and the influential aspect that may elicit varying human behaviors, this phenomenon would be the more appropriately explored through a qualitative phenomenological design. A quantitative or mixed methods design would lack the in-depth inquiry in data to understand this phenomenon including, participants' policy-specific knowledge, conceptual knowledge, and perceptions about police use of force policies. Other designs or approaches would be less contextualized in detail and may lack the in-depth understanding of potential mitigating factors such as, the essence of lived experiences of participants, textual descriptions necessary to provide an analysis of human perceptions, and behavioral interactions necessary to understand the complexity of police use of force policies related to deadly force.

Conceptual Framework

This study combines multiple theories to enrich the conceptual framework in this qualitative phenomenological study. The guiding theories for this study include social constructionism, exemplification theory, and Bittner's theory. These theories were used to explore the main research questions to gain a better understanding of how influential opinions are formed. Additionally, these theories were beneficial in clarifying data for the researcher to understand mitigating factors of participant perceptions of police. Those mitigating factors included, differing social and cultural backgrounds of citizens that

possibly contributed to their perceptions of police-citizen encounters of force. Through understanding the combined elements of public perceptions versus actual policy-specific knowledge about policing policies, this could provide more transparency between citizens and the police in Palm Beach County, Florida.

Eliminating the distorted and misinterpreted opinions citizens have about policing policy, may help policing agencies to provide the public greater transparency on police-citizen deadly force encounters and policing policies. This will also help rebuild trust and promote a more cooperative relationship between citizens and the police with benefits for communities, such as reduction in crime and increased safety in their neighborhoods.

Today, citizens acquire their information about policing policies and police-citizen encounters of force from sources such as, social media, mainstream media, friends, and community or public leaders, rather than from law enforcement. This is not the fault of citizens or the media but, is sometimes due to individual police agencies or state and federal recommendations to hide policy availability from public review. When the public is not allowed access and review of policing policies, these actions by policing agencies can often be seen by the public as poor police-citizen relations. The policing agencies ambiguity in sharing these policies with citizens, lead residents to use less reliable sources such as media, social media, or public leaders to obtain their information about police-citizen encounters of force and policing policies.

Therefore, when police-citizen use of force encounters occur, these incidents can be perceived by citizens as police brutality, excessive force, a breach of individual officer trust, or even a betrayal of trust by the entire policing agency. These police-citizen

encounters may also be viewed by some citizens as protective measures by an individual officer or policing agency, or a justified act of necessary conduct depending upon the receiving audience. Further exploration into the phenomenon of police-citizen deadly force encounters and citizens policy-specific knowledge about policing policies will help to address concerns of the public, while trying to rebuild community-police relations and trust in law enforcement in Palm Beach County, Florida.

Definitions of Terms

Accountability: A fundamental principal within democratic societies that provides for both individuals and agencies to address what police do, how they perform their daily tasks in terms of upholding laws, and individualized treatment of citizens (Peters & Brave, 2006).

Citizen-police encounters: Exchanges that are initiated by the police or a citizen in a call to a law enforcement agency for police services.

Community leaders: A designation or title for a person seen by the community to represent, in part or in its entirety, the community either through purpose or by practice.

Community Policing: Police taking interactive roles with citizens and proactive approaches to address public safety and other crime-related concerns (Community Oriented Policing Services, 2014). This type of policing typically involves three main elements: community partnerships, problem solving, and organizational transformation.

Community-police relations: Mutually extended cooperation between the community and police which can promote more thorough and effective enforcement

through enhancing communication from citizens to inform police about crime-related issues.

Conceptual Knowledge: A way of thinking that is connected to an individual's cognitive thought process, which entails perceptions, influences, or and of an issue rather than facts (Barabas & Jerit, 2009).

Deadly force: Force that is likely to cause death or grave bodily harm.

Epoche: An approach often used in phenomenology where the researcher refrains from judging data retrieved regarding whether anything exists or can exist pertaining to transcendental reduction (Patton, 2002).

Ideology: A set of ideas or ideals, which forms the basis of political theory and policy (Gerber & Jackson, 2017).

Media: A means of communication to the public through such forums as radio, television, newspapers, social media, or magazines, and often reach or influence people widely (Zillmann, 1999)

Police use of force: The amount of effort required by police to compel compliance by an unwilling subject (Klahm & Tillyer, 2010).

Policing legitimacy: Where members of the public view the police as legitimate, generally measured by the public's willingness to obey and cooperate with the police (Goddwill, Laurence, Lehmann, Francis, & Eyre, 2010).

Policing Policy: Actions or systems of principles adopted and implemented by law enforcement agencies that provide guidance regarding department philosophies on identified issues (Orrick, n.d.).

Policy-specific knowledge and/or specific knowledge: Knowledge that is specific to an organization's rules, methods, or responsibilities, often associated with governments or bureaucracies (Barabas & Jerit, 2009).

Political Ideology: Differing sets of shared beliefs about the ways in which the order of society is constituted and what the accepted means to achieve this order are (Gerber & Jackson, 2017).

Social Media: Websites or other online means of communication (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube) to share information or develop social and professional contacts (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Transparency: The principals that deal with the honesty and openness to the community through the Code of Ethics within policing agencies (COPS, 2014).

Use of Force Continuum (Continua): Full range of actions that can be used by police to deter crime, which include no force, less than lethal force, excessive force, and other types of interventions such as hand to hand combat and verbal commands.

Assumptions

As previously noted, police use of force has drawn much criticism from citizens in the U.S. In this study, the researcher assumes that citizens have very little policy-specific knowledge about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters, in Palm Beach County. It is also assumed by the researcher that, most of citizens will have conceptual or perceptional knowledge about policing policy and police-citizen deadly force encounters, then policy-specific knowledge. This may be due to policing agencies not granting access to their policing policies through public records requests, or because

of the repetitive reporting by media and social media after police-citizen deadly force

encounters occur. The police-citizen encounters of force reported by media are often

brief, lacking complete information of the incident, show media clips that are digitally

altered, and are often an account of an individual's (or another person's) experience of the

encounter. The researcher does assume that any information provided by participant's in

this research will be honest, factual, and correct depictions of their lived experiences.

This study further assumes that, if a large majority of citizens do lack policy-

specific knowledge about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters,

then most citizens don't have specific knowledge about policing policies. This lack of

policy-specific knowledge of policing policies by citizens may be the root a cause of the

dysfunctional relationship between police and the public, hindering this positive and

cooperative relationship in Palm Beach County. Any negative perceptions about police,

by citizens, could be reformed through improved transparency of policing policies from

policing agencies. Establishing a positive relationship with the public through agency

transparency could also prevent or reduce police-citizen deadly force encounters.

<h3 style="text-align:center">Delimitations</h3>

This study is limited in both its demographic and sample size. Participant

selection for this study is limited to a small sample size, which consists of citizens

residing in Palm Beach County, Florida for 5 years prior to the commencement of data

collection. All individuals willing to participate in this study were able to meet specific

criteria to participate in the study. Specific requirements of participants were not to have

any friends or family that were employed in law enforcement or previously retired from a

law enforcement agency. Participants were asked about their criminal backgrounds by the researcher, participants with minor infractions did meet study criteria. However, individuals with a current or past felony background, did not fit the criteria for this study. The population in this study consist of citizens that are diverse in sex, races, ages and religions. The age range set by researcher for participants were between the ages of 25 and 55 years old, and participants had to currently live within Palm Beach County boundaries. The researcher selected these criteria for the study based on Palm Beach County's diverse population. The geographical location was selected as well, for researcher convenience due to the time restrains of this study.

A stratified purposeful sampling strategy was used in this study to predetermine participants based on criteria that could be beneficial to the study. The researcher polled 40 individuals with a purposeful stratified questionnaire to find and obtain 25 participants necessary for this study. For the recruitment and selection of participants, the researcher used a public park located within Palm Beach County, and closed questionnaires to obtain individuals that were good qualifying candidates for this study. The researcher randomly chose participants using the purposeful stratified questionnaire who met study criteria and represented the overall population within Palm Beach County, Florida.

After the selection of individuals for participant within this study, and prior to data collection, willing participants were informed of their rights and responsibilities associated with this study. This included but was not limited to, the right to opt out of the study at any time, and the right to review any information the participant provided to researcher. Citizens that agreed and were willing to participant in the study, were

informed of confidentiality rights. Participants were also provided with the researchers contact information, for accessibility to the researcher, to express any concerns prior to and during their participation. Prior to their participation, each participant was fully informed, in detail, about the purpose of the study.

Limitations

The first limitation to note in this study is the small sample size with a select population located in Palm Beach County, Florida. The small sample size could constrain the generalization of findings in other policing agencies and citizen populations throughout the United States. The second limitation in this study is researcher bias, because the researcher has many associations with law enforcement, public leaders, and the media. Whereas, the researcher is sometimes privy to some internal information otherwise not available to the public. This bias was controlled through epoche to ensure objectivity. Therefore, steps were taken to implement Epoche to ensure objectivity, and the researcher took steps to discontinue those associations until the analysis of this study was complete.

In Epoche, the researcher's everyday understandings, judgements and knowing's of the subject matter are set aside, and the phenomena revisited with a naively fresh wide-open sense, by the researcher, from the vantage point of a pure or transcendental nature (Patton, 2002).

Figure 1: Dynmaics regarding the use of epoche

This will lead to better in-depth descriptions of participants lived experiences and

provide, a deeper meaning of the unique qualities and components that make the
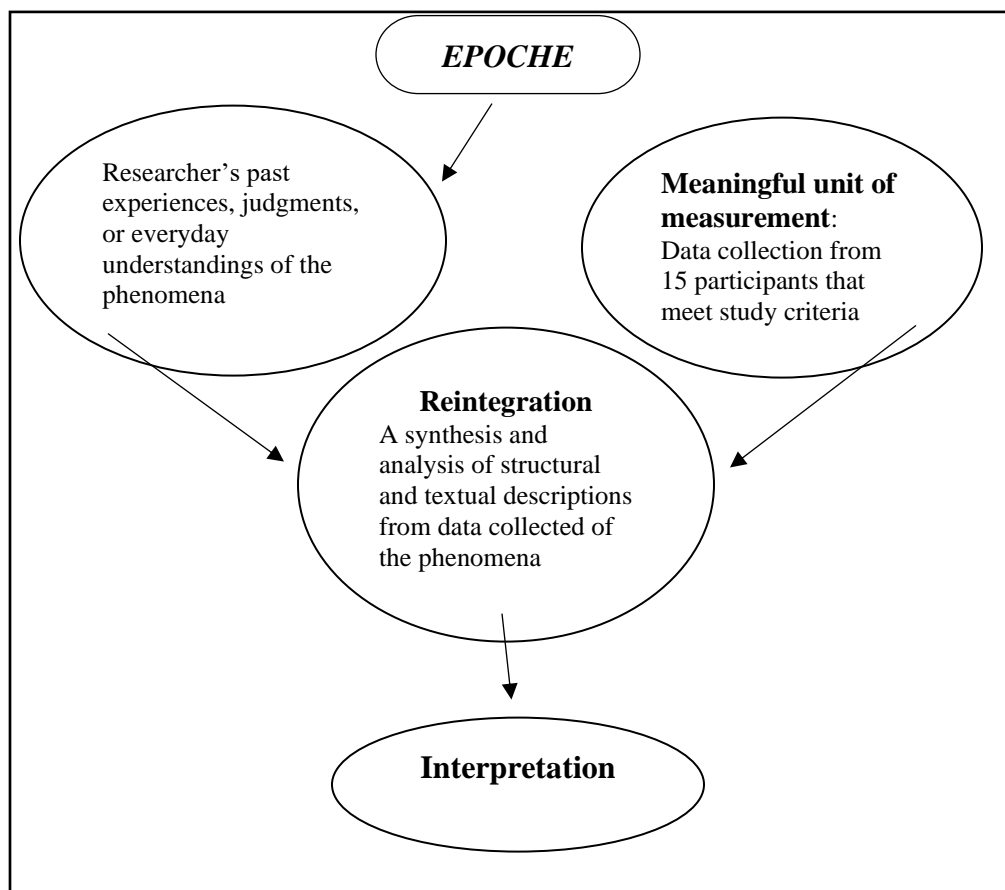
phenomena what it is. Figure 1, *Dynamics regarding the use of epoche* illustrates the use

of epoche. The process of epoche is often used in phenomenological studies, because it

also allows the researcher to reflect and become aware of any potential personal bias.

This helps the researcher to eliminate personal involvement in the subject matter and to

gain clarity about any preconceptions. It also allows the data to emerge directly from participants' viewpoints and experiences, not from the researchers.

In ensuring objectivity and reliability in this study the researcher remained open-minded and nonjudgmental about participants' views and experiences with respect to law enforcement, media, social media practices, and leaders' commentary about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters, in Palm Beach County. To guarantee this study is reliable and accurate, all potential biases were revealed by the researcher. Additionally, participants' and the researcher may hold varying perceptions about officers, law enforcement agencies, the media, social media, public leaders, policing policies, and police-citizen deadly force encounters prior to this study. It is important for the accuracy of this study and any future research on this phenomenon to disclose all possible limitations that could affect this study's reliability.

Significance of the Study

This research will be beneficial to identify and establish citizens' policy-specific knowledge and perceptions about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters. Despite strict limits and mandates on police use of force within the United States, there is still considerable departmental variations on policing policies across the U.S. (Willits & Nowacki, 2013). Discretion by officers is essential, when it comes to police-citizen encounters, because these encounters can escalate quickly, and it may be necessary for law enforcement to use deadly force options. For the public to understand how much discretion officers have during these escalated encounters, policing policies should be made available to the public for their review. However, since a significant

number of policing agencies do not make their use of force policies accessible or available for public examination, citizens are unaware of them. This leaves the media, reports on social media, and varying public leaders in control of verbalizing their own perceptions about police-citizen deadly force encounters.

Overzealous media reports can sometimes put officers, and their agencies, in danger of negative public scrutiny. Public safety can be at risk as well, from the added criminal activity that goes along with peaceful protests, due to the negative publicity of officers. Policing agencies that provide greater policy transparency with the public have fewer concerns about their public image and negative impacts, due to media reports. Public knowledge about policing policies is important for policy review and reform. Otherwise, policy reviews and reforms are largely unresolved, leaving little room for constructive changes to police policies that benefit both communities and law enforcement. This study could be significant to changing the ideology of the public on police reform and help citizens to move forward in the direction of better policing policy and resolutions on police reforms.

There have been many debates regarding police use of force policies, especially involving deadly force. However, in police use of force literature socioeconomic status or race tends to play a more significant role, than other aspects, in the general public's attitudes regarding the mistrust of law enforcement. Brown and Benedict (2002) explained that, racial inequalities may be true to some extent in police use of force literature and, study variables of these groups can be misguided by mitigating factors that lack in statistical data necessary to determine the true relevance of crime attributes in

some socioeconomic and geographical locales. In police use of force studies involving socioeconomic status or race, variables to define the population are restricted to specific groups with the population that include, felonious offenders, black male juveniles, or white female offenders. These studies provide disproportionate variables that don't depict the true representation of the diverse population within communities (Klam & Tillyer, 2010).

The topic of police use of force concerning deadly force is dynamically complicated. It is difficult to encompass all the dynamics (i.e.., officer training, psychological aspects of officers and citizen, organizational culture) within police use of force into a single study. Rojeck, Alpret, et. al., (2012) agreed that, qualitative studies provide the best narrative for personal accounts and experiences of individuals involved in use of force encounters, but the qualitative versus quantitative analysis is necessity for social scientists to understand the diversity of people's personal views and experiences within the social world in which they occur.

A phenomenological perspective in this study will provide an enriched, complete, and necessary analysis of the public's perspectives regarding the complexity of police-citizen deadly force encounters and policing policies. In this study, a small but diverse population of individuals who have had neither positive nor negative encounters with police was reviewed to control any biases that participants may have about policing. The criteria-based parameters for participants in this study helped the researcher to provide a clearer depictions of the public's knowledge and perceptions about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters. Those collective public perceptions can help local

policymakers to make determinations to improve policing policies regarding the conduct of police and agency transparency, in Palm Beach County.

There is an abundance of literature on police use of force and deadly force that explores various organizational functions such as, specific types of police-citizen encounters and internal agency processes, and protocols for officer conduct that highlight professional behavior or administrative conduct evaluations. However, to understand citizens point of view about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters, it is important to specifically examine how much citizens know about their local agency's policing policies. Therefore, there should be extensive explorations into the publics knowledge about policing policies including, why negative perceptions are formed by citizens, where distrust or delegitimatization comes from, media exemplification and its effects on the receptive public, and other aspects that may influence conceptual knowledge of policing policies and the police.

Currently, there is little literature that demonstrates U.S. citizens knowledge about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters that include, why these policies are controversial or misunderstood by the public, or why they are continually debated by the American public. Specific national definitions about police use of deadly force, excessive force, and reasonable force should be investigated and clarified, so that basic policing policy definitions can be understood by all American citizens throughout the United States. Clarifying those basic policing policy definitions will enhance the American public's understanding policing policies and police-citizen use of force

encounters. In addition, outlining police use of force policies and how they are applied

may help to provide the enhancement of police legitimacy and citizen-police relations.

This study is important for criminal justice reformists, researchers, law

enforcement agencies, community leaders, judiciaries, politicians, media, and the

American public. All adjunct field-related researchers have the potential to enhance the

American public's comprehension about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force,

through the creation of awareness, promotion of educational knowledge, and the

formation of special educational programs. Broadening the American public's

understanding of policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters may help to

address some of underlying public concerns involving police transparency and

legitimacy, while strengthening both officer and citizen safety. Moreover, due to the

inherent risk of legal liability to officers and their agencies that are involved in deadly

force incidents, law enforcement agencies and unions should provide the American

public with an understanding of current policing policies. This might help to prevent

negative conceptions of law enforcement and increase the legitimacy of actions

conducted by law enforcement officers to protect and serve the public.

Implications for social change in this study, on the public's knowledge about

policing policy and police-citizen deadly force encounters, is crucial for the security of

the public and the legitimacy of law enforcement within the Palm Beach County and the

United States (US). The literature confirms that in most circumstances officers only

escalate to higher levels of force outlined in the police continuum model when greater

force is necessary to control an individual's actions. For instance, when an individual

becomes extremely combative or has a weapon, protective actions by police are within the reasonable and legal authority to control a hostile situation. However, some of these forceful actions by police when detaining combative individuals are not always clearly understood by the American public. It is possible that, if the American public were educated about the fundamentals of policing policies on use of force, it would enhance police legitimacy, strengthen public trust, promote mutual support for cooperative relations between police and citizens, and perhaps even reduce violent crimes.

Currently, there are many consequences for officers who lawfully engage in use of force of any kind, especially when the media negatively exemplifies or depicts these encounters in a way that provokes public fear and civil unrest. Media broadcasts that spread across social media platforms can be detrimental to the enactment of positive police reforms or policy enhancements to the criminal justice system. Some policing policies that the American public wants to see reformed the U.S. involve police use of force actions under the continuum model. The prospect of rapid information sharing by the global public and the media is a serious issue for law enforcement and citizens alike and, should be concerning for all criminology professionals because it impedes positive reforms. As the global society continues to evolve in terms of how information is shared. The rapid sharing of news reports by the media and through online social media platforms by global citizens should not be seen as normal or routine ways of communicating use of force incidents, as police-citizen relations continue to become unsustainable.

Summary

Many aspects of police use of force policies, protocols, and procedures that involve deadly force within the U.S. are highly controversial among the American public and U.S. governmental entities. In the United States, police can uphold laws using a use of force continuum model, deploying various levels of force which includes deadly force, to protect and secure the safety of the public. Although a wide range of research has been done regarding use of force policies and deadly force, the American public's conceptual, perceptual, and policy-specific knowledge about these policies has not been extensively explored.

Deadly force has been used for centuries for the protection of both officers and communities within America. U.S. today, newly formed activist groups have emerged to seize action through public outcries against the use of deadly force, bringing the fundamentals of this policing practice to the forefront of police scrutiny. Recent negative public perceptions and opinions about police, due to the repetitious reporting by media of deadly force incidents, are creating safety and security issues for both the public and police. Law enforcement practices of deadly force are currently in the controversial spotlight, causing public distrust of police and civil liberty unrest in America. Recently, there have also been an increase in officer deaths through several random ambush killings of officers in America, from new movements of vigilante justice to pay back law enforcement for their use of force actions and policies.

The American public maintains varying perspectives regarding police, both positive and negative, especially when it comes to the use of excessive force or deadly

force. When police-citizen encounters of force are reported through mass media, social media platforms, or community leaders, the public perceives that injustices or law enforcement corruption occurs frequently, and justice for the public cannot be served under a perceptibly flawed criminal justice system. What is often first reported in the mass media is either on-scene or limited information about police-citizen encounters involving use of force. When police-citizen deadly force encounters occur, community leaders will give impartial statements about police-citizen force incidents to the media during news briefings such as, we are in the initial state of our investigation or we will provide that information at a later time. Following the brief interview with community leaders, media then reports their interpretation of those community leader's statements.

Recently, public uproar from various activist groups across the U.S. have been attempting to make their voices heard, to create changes to current policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters. A component that is often overlooked, by the American public, but would be beneficial in examining police policies is the conceptual and policy-specific knowledge that U.S. citizens have about policing policies, and how their perceptions of law enforcement are formed. Chapter 2of this study will include a literature regarding police use of force as it pertains to deadly force, exemplifications used by mass media and social media platforms, and community leaders influence on public perception, to understand the impacts those phenomena have on the American public's policy-specific knowledge regarding policing policies. Furthermore, Chapter 3 will include a review of the methodology that was used in this study including proposed data collection and data analysis procedures.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The phenomenon of police-citizen deadly force encounters and policing policies that involve these actions, have been the center of debate in the U.S. among politicians, community leaders, researchers, law enforcement, and the American public for centuries (Alpert & MacDonald, 2001; Campbell, et al., 2018). Currently, policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters have garnered attention in the media and among U.S. public leaders. Due to several high-profile deadly force incidents that have occurred in various states, provoking civil unrest in many U.S. communities. These incidents have led to revenge on police officers through actions referred to as ambush killings, which is the act of blindsiding officers to cause them harm or death.

Although the American public's interest in police use force is increasing, policy-specific and conceptual knowledge about law enforcement's use of force policies, procedures, and protocols vary dramatically across cities and states within the U.S. (Barabas & Jerit, 2009). In addition to the American public's multifaceted knowledge of police use of force policies, amplified commentary by media may also influence the level of trust U.S. citizens have about law enforcement (Alpert & MacDonald, 2001; Campbell et al., 2018). Furthermore, there appears to be a lack of consistency among agencies at the national, state, and local levels within the U.S. when it comes to reporting or keeping up-to-date and accurate data pertaining to use of force incidents between citizens and the police (Rojek, Alpert, & Smith, 2012; Worden & McLean, 2016).

Klam & Tillyer, 2010; Pinizzotto, et al., 2012; Terrill & Paoline, 2013; Willits & Nowacki, 2013) examined, the use of force by police, involving deadly force, and concentrated their attention on the behaviors of the individuals in these incidents rather than on the policies that govern the police use of force actions. Brandi and Stroshine (2012), explored the daunting task of examining police use of force legalities, statistics, policy, and protocols, regarding different types of force used by officers (i.e., deadly, excessive, physical, moderate, or minimal force), Other correlating factors there were explored were, whether proper discretion was used by officers' or if training provided to officers' was sufficient for the situation. Klinger (2008), used quantitative analysis and various mixed methodologies and theories and complied statistics from sources that reported incomplete or unsound data, which demonstrated an absence of clarity involving the elaborate dynamics in police use of force incidents.

The aim of this study is to examine the citizen's policy-specific and conceptual knowledge about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters to gain a better understanding of any factors that may influence the knowledge of citizens in Palm Beach County, Florida. Klinger (2008), pointed out, the state of Florida was least likely to report their police-citizen force incidents to a federal or state database, making the task of obtaining information regarding policing policies related to police use of force difficult. This study will further investigate police-citizen deadly force encounters, the influences the media has on policing policy interpretations and perceptions, and how commentary from community leaders regarding use of force incidents affect the public's perceptions of these policies. Currently there are few qualitative studies, in Florida or any

other state, that have examined police use of force policies, regarding deadly force from public perceptions of police.

Police Use of Force

During the 1970s, police use of force was defined as a distinct characteristic of policing and has long been investigated and debated by criminological researchers since its conception (Brandi & Stroshine, 2012). In 2020, any force tactics used by police are generally defined under the guidelines of the agency's force continuum model. The National Institute of Justice (NIJ, 2011) defined police use of force as "the amount of effort required by police to compel compliance by an unwilling subject" (p. 1). At the direction of the U.S. Department of Justice, the NIJ was asked to provide justification of police use of force and how or why it reduced crime at the state and local levels. Much of the literature pertaining to police use of force provides various verbiage to define it. Although definitions greatly vary, the contextual meaning of the term police use of force has remained consistent within the literature. In the use of force literature, the term is repeatedly criticized because of the different verbiage used to define the term.

Policing policies involving organizational use of force continua often vary from state to state and agency to agency. Levels of force are instantaneously used through officer discretion and perceptions of risks involved as soon as a citizen-police encounter is initiated. If at any time during initial contact an officer believes an encounter is beginning to escalate to a point where there may be a greater risk involved, the officer will apply various levels of force according to the continuum as necessary to protect themselves and the American public. When an officer must appropriately use force

options within the continuum model, this can lead to a wide range of decisions involving appropriate types of force equivalent to risks that should be applied for different types of police-citizen encounters (NIJ, 2009). In 2020, even though many documents are available via public records requests from local, county, or state law enforcement organizations, some agencies will not allow the American public to view their use of force continuum policies.

The inability of previous police use of force studies to determine the dynamics involved in police-citizen encounters of force (Klahm and Tillyer, 2010), may contribute to the confusion and lack of understanding by criminological researchers that are involved in explaining the various details involved in these occurrences. In addition, Campbell, et al., 2018; Klahm and Tillyer, 2010; and Rojek et al., 2012 explain that the research on police use of force may not be reliable to statistical inconsistencies in study variables. Gerber and Jackson, 2017 explain that in recent years, the literature on police use of deadly force has gained significant attention because of the presumptive increase in American citizen deaths by police and the ambush killings of police officers by American citizens.

When police-citizen encounters occur involving force, American citizens have opposing perceptions of the encounter and often accuse officers of using excessive force. As Rojek, et al (2012) explained that, there are justified and legal ramifications for a person who fails to comply with authority's commands, brandishes a weapon, or exhibits certain aggressive behaviors within police-citizen encounters. When police-citizen encounters become escalated through the result of a miscommunication or otherwise,

there is a potential likelihood that officers may have to use force against that person, and it can ultimately result in physical harm or even death.

Laws and Policies: Police Use of Force

Peters and Brave (2007) suggested that prior to the 1960s, law enforcement officers were rarely if at all held accountable for use of force actions against the public. However, in 1961 the U.S. Supreme court began to clarify police accountability and set out definitions for constitutional violations of law enforcement actions that fell under the Federal Civil Rights Act (FCRA) of 1964. During that same year, law enforcement agencies across the U.S. began developing force guidelines to better clarify use of force actions. In the late 1970s, federal sanctions that were legally bound and upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in the mid-1960s were then expanded to include both state and local governmental agencies (Peters & Brave, 2007). Use of force guidelines established by law enforcement agencies referred to as the force continuum model, assisted officers with their decision-making process when applying various types of force to specific situations, when in the field (Peters & Brave, 2007).

The purpose of the force continuum model and its design was to hold officers accountable for his or her actions. The continuum also gave officers a standardized guide of certain use of force options they could apply for specific situations encountered in the field. Many of the force options available to officers were generalized, giving discretion to officers to use the necessary force needed to control a specific police-citizen encounter. The continuum was to be designed in accordance with police legal liabilities, making the guidelines practical for the safety of officers, the American public and the protection of

victims of crime (Aveni, 2005). Force continua are developed internally by policing

agencies to meet specific standards of those agencies, such as their organizational

dynamics and policing resources within their community population (ie., rural, suburban,

urban).

There are several inconsistencies today in the continua design. There are

numerous debates over its accuracy in assisting officers with their decision making. The

continuum also has insufficient National standards for policing agencies across the U.S.,

causing confusion amongst the American public, that presumably lack policy-specific

knowledge about the continua. Much of the debate over the creation of the continuum

addresses the scenarios officers may come across during a police-citizen encounter. It is

difficult to address every scenario an officer may encounter during police-citizen

encounters. Researchers Aveni, (2005), and Peters and Brave, (2007) question whether

the continuum is an appropriate tool that should be used by law enforcement agencies,

due to the absence of specific guidance it gives to officers.

Although most policing agencies have force continuum's in place to protect

officers and their agency from legal liabilities, it does not protect them from all liabilities.

Since 1989 the courts have predominately relied on two U.S. Supreme court cases,

Tennessee v. Garner, 471 U.S. 1 and *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 to address legal

issues that may arise from police-citizen encounters of force, including deadly force. The

legalities discussed by the courts, that arise during these police-citizen encounters of

force pertain to the violation of civil rights to individual by officers. In *Tennessee v.*

Garner, the court held that, the use of force (from minimal to deadly) which leads to the

apprehension of a suspect is in fact a seizure under the Fourth Amendment, and the standard of objective reasonableness under the Fourth Amendment should be applied (Wallentine, 2009).

Although *Tennessee v. Garner* had set the standard for objective reasonableness, the U.S. Supreme Court expanded their legal focus of *Garner* in the case of *Graham v. Connor* which stated, the objective reasonableness standard under the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution would be applied to all claims involving police use of force to seize or stop a free person. *Graham v. Connor* would also attempt to address those claims that involve assertions of excessive force used by police.

The lower state courts, by direction of *Graham v. Connor*, applied the objective reasonableness standard in future cases by determining several factors that included, but were not limited to, the severity of the crime, the immediate threat posed by a suspect on officers or public safety, and whether the suspect actively resisted his or her arrest (Wallentine, 2009).

The cases of *Graham v. Connor* and *Tennessee v. Garner* are used for legal issues that involve police use of force because the continuum model used by policing agencies are not legally recognized documents in the court of law (Lee & Vaughn, 2010). The continuum is merely a guideline for officers' discretion which has undergone repeated progressions and devaluations since its conception. Due to the continuum's continued criticism by criminal justice experts on its ethical standards within policing agencies, in judicious standing of courts, officer accountability and discretion in police-citizen counters, and in the training that law enforcement officers receive within their agencies,

these guidelines are considered by the court as a standard of protocol for an officer under their employing agency.

Due to the force continuum model's failure to account for situational factors within the field that officers may encounter during a rapidly evolving police-citizen encounter, courts can only recognize the continuum model as a practical guideline under departmental policy. The U.S. Supreme court considers the actions officers took in relation to their departmental policies outlined, in attempting to clarify legal liabilities and civil rights infractions (Lee & Vaughn, 2010). Due to the continuum's design it is difficult to hold officers legally liable for their actions, or inactions, under only the continuum itself, causing misinterpretation of these policies by the American public when police-citizen encounters of force occurs (Wallentine, 2009). Literature conducted on the use of continuum practices indicate opposition to its design and use since its conception. Lee and Vaughn (2010) and Wallentine (2009) denote, the continuum's absence of coverage for different policing scenarios that could arise during a police-citizen encounter, leave officers vulnerable to legal liabilities (Lee & Vaughn, 2010; Wallentine, 2009).

According to Terrill and Paoline, III (2013), the continuum model used by law enforcement agencies merely increases the legal liability for officers' and hampers their abilities to make appropriate lifesaving decisions during critical incidents. The continuum actually proves to be more restrictive on officers' than the federal, state, and local laws themselves, used in court litigations for police-citizen encounters of force. One reason the continuum appears to be more restrictive is, its design follows a linear based model

depicting force options in various incremental steps. However, due to the rapid escalation that could occur in some police-citizen encounters, the linear steps of the continuum are not often aligned with the quick decisions officers' have make to protect themselves or someone else, rendering these models irrelevant (Hough & Tatum, 2012; Lee & Vaughn, 2010; Terrill & Paoline, III, 2013; Wallentine, 2009). The force continua embedded within agency policy often leave individual officers legally accountable, or even negligent, for their actions or decisions used in police-citizen force encounters.

In 2020, agency continuum's are still implemented in officer training courses and readily inserted into agency policies for administrative use, but some researchers continue to argue about the continuum's potential weaknesses (Ciminelli, 2014; Hough & Tatum, 2012; Peters & Brave, 2007; Terrill & Paoline, III, 2013; Wallentine, 2009). The main concern and criticism about continuum's are, they cannot be based solely on the standard of objective reasonableness established by *Graham v. Connor*, there is no nationally accepted model of the continuum, and it lacks a design that defines the sufficient levels of force officers need for various police-citizen encounters (Hough & Tatum, 2012). Criminologist would like to see nationwide changes in the U.S. to the continuum's design and policies. The changes should reflect a consistency among U.S. policing agencies that are beneficial to officers with more protections regarding legal liabilities, with greater civil liberties protections in the judicial system for both police and the American public.

Deadly Force

Historically the use of force by police, especially deadly force, is a rare

occurrence in police-citizen encounters. Miller (2015) stated, annual incidents of police

use of deadly force in the U.S. averaged to approximately 360 cases per year. Such as, the

2014 police shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, that caused highly

publicized civil unrest and demonstrations by the American public in major cities across

the United States. However, the annual totals of police-citizen deadly force encounters

statistically tend to fluctuate, but due to repeated media coverage these incidents can

appear to be more frequent (Campbell et al., 2018). According to current media reports,

police-citizen deadly force encounters and shootings of officers by the American public

have both increased from past years. Campbell et al., (2018) explain that, it is hard to

determine the frequency of police-citizen deadly force encounters because police use of

force studies show that using research data to identify crime data is limited.

Since the case of Michael Brown in 2014, news outlets like the Washington Post

and the Guardian have begun collecting their own data on police-citizen deadly force

encounters (Campbell, et al., 2108). The crime statistics by these news outlets have

become so valuable to researchers in current studies on use of force. Campbell et al.,

2018) agreed that using these alternative data sources for statistical information about

police-citizen deadly force encounters were more reliable and accurate than DOJ sources.

The number of officers killed while on duty in the U.S. in 2017 averaged 66 deaths and is

said to be the lowest seen in over 50 years (Hayes, 2017). Sullivan, et al. (2017) argued

that ,492 American citizens were killed by police officers, as reported by media in July of

2017, which compared to the average of deaths within the first six months in the previous

two years. Although the work of Miller (2015) reflected an annual average of police-citizen deadly force incidents to be 360 per year, in 2017 that those annual rates were slightly higher than in 2015.

Miller (2015) stated the data may have been slightly under-reported using governmental crime data reports, compared to the 2014 report released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation reporting the annual data on law enforcement deaths in the line of duty that same year. The FBI showed an increase of almost 89% in 2013 for in the line of duty police deaths (FBI, 2015). As Campbell, et al., (2018) denoted, even in long-term stability of policing agencies, fatal police-citizen deadly force encounters will fluctuate showing annual totals to be either greater or lesser in any given year.

FBI crime reports may show an increase of in the line of duty deaths. This could be due to the recently publicized ambush killings of police officers, and the heighten retaliation on police by American citizen or increased public activism amongst such groups as Black Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter. As noted previously, crime data involving police-citizen deadly force encounters are often under reported by policing agencies and these incidents are often entered using different types of data bases. These inconsistencies make statistical data on police-citizen deadly force encounters more difficult to analyze in determining the actual number of incidents and deaths of police and American citizens.

Miller (2015) explained that, officers often restrain from using deadly force during police-citizen encounters approximately 90% of the time, even in instances where the officer's own safety may be jeopardy or when officers' may be objectively justified in

using greater force options. Many officers who enter a career in law enforcement, do so because they enjoy having more authority in serving and protecting the communities, they live in. There may be some individuals that enter a career with law enforcement having other ulterior motives such as, the mere title of authority or vigilantism. There are rare occasions where officers with vigilante intentions surface in policing agencies across the U.S. These types of officers are often dealt with by agency supervisors and are reprimanded, demoted, or fired from the agency in which they are employed. In some instances, a few bad officers may often disenfranchise the entire policing agency and the good officers' that honorably serve their community.

When deadly force becomes an officer's only option in a police-citizen encounter, an officers' actions become closely scrutinized by law enforcement superiors, internal affairs division of the agency, community leaders, the media, and the public (Willits & Nowacki, 2013). There is a lot of controversy and concern in America over the force used by police, especially that of deadly force. When officers use force outlined in the continuum, they generally follow agency protocol, procedure, or policy. Since the public is unaware of these policing policies or ill-informed about them, actions by police in these police-citizen force encounters are seen by the American public as overly aggressive, unnecessary, or excessive.

The confusion and misinterpretation by the American public over policing policies and actions, lead to questions about officers' decision making during those police-citizen force encounters. The policing agencies transparency also raises some questions by American citizens when the agencies attempt to self-evaluate questionable

force practices of their own police-citizen force encounters. Miller (2015) said, "much of the controversy over police officers using deadly force against supposedly unarmed suspects relates to confusion or precisely those issues of what is defined as mortal danger and what constitutes a proportionate response" (p. 101).

The American public may not be sufficiently informed about policing policies. The public may also prefer not to engage themselves in understanding their agencies policing policies. Another issue concerning citizen's actual knowledge on policing policies is, law enforcement agencies don't educate the American public on their agencies policing policies or and don't make them available for public inspection. As Blair, et al. (2011) explained, there is a perception among the American public which denotes that officers are too quick to use deadly force, or that they should only use deadly force in cases where an individual with a gun uses force against them first. The lack of understanding by the public on police policy should be a concern for both the police and the public, because as Willits and Norwacki (2013) point out, "police use of deadly force represents a behavior that can substantially impact police legitimacy and more importantly, the quality of officer-citizen interactions" (p. 77). Additionally, Miller (2015) stated that, "police officers characteristically restrain their use of force with citizens, sometimes at the cost of their own lives" (p. 97).

The use of deadly force is within the continuum's design and has strictive limitations that are mandated by, local, state, and federal law, and are overseen by policing agencies. Pinizzotto, et al., (2012) agreed that the strict limitations posed by the continuum, from agencies on officers, are sometimes problematic. Law enforcement

agencies recently, has attempted to address some of those concerns related to the continuum. Worden and McLean, (2016) denoted that, police use of deadly force research focuses more specifically on officer decision-making and other factors that addresses the various levels of force within the continuum.

Concerns that policing agencies attempt to address related to the continuum model are the types of interactions that occur during police-citizen encounters, such as officers' conduct, officer demeanor or behavior, officer mentality, or the specific training an officer has undergone. Other factors that policing agencies focus on may include environmental, organizational, and situational aspects that may influence the use of force applied by the officer (Pinizzotto, et al., 2012); Worden & McLean, 2016). In assessing the actions and decision-making processes of officers under the continuum model, Willits and Nowacki (2013) recommended exploration into the differences of organizational dynamics, such as the agency size or geographical location, to help understand how varying officers assert discretion and decision-making. This may help clarify whether those policing actions or behaviors impact others, possibly increasing the chances of deadly force encounters to occur.

In the examination of policies on organizational functions in law enforcement White (2001) suggested that, future research on agencies internal administrative policies, or lack thereof, causing conflict to formal policies may benefit from a reanalysis in administrative review of policy. Periodic reviews are necessary since some policies may hinder or limit officer discretion depending on the type of police-citizen encounter, further restricting officers in their decision-making for use of force options (Worden &

McLean, 2017). Aside from periodic reviews, there also is a need for American citizens and police to develop one central criminal justice database for policing agencies across the U.S. (Miller, 2015; Pinizzotto, et al., 2012; Worden & McLean, 2016), to document and report use of force incidents that result in the injury or death to citizens or police. The use of a national crime data base that can maintain accurate statistical data on fatal shootings of citizen and police may be helpful to policy makers in contemplating effective reforms on policing policies.

Klinger, (2008); Miller, (2015); Pinizzotto, et al., (2012); and Worden and McLean, (2016), agree there is an extensive need for a centralized crime data base that reflects complete and accurate information. Even today, the reporting of data on fatal shootings by police reported by law enforcement or other governmental agencies, vary from state to state and agency to agency, leaving many gaps in the data being reported. Policing agencies throughout the U.S. report crime data to different agencies that may including, Supplemental Homicide Reporting System (SHRS), National Vital Statistics System (NVSS), Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), or the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), data is sometimes underreported and not all agencies report their data to the same crime data base . Campbell, et al., (2018) explained that currently the only means of retrieving accurate crime data is through such websites and news media that include, killed by police, fatal encounters, The Guardian, or The Washington Post, who have been collecting data since 2000 on fatal shootings in police-citizen encounters of force. Klinger (2008), and Sherman and Langworthy's (1979) pointed out that the inadequate

reporting and recording of crime data by governmental entities of fatal shootings by police, is unfortunately still an accurate representation today.

When police-citizen deadly force encounters occur, questions concerning the justification of the officers' actions and citizens' reactions, in this type of phenomena often arise through news media, community leaders, and the public. Some questions posed by the public, media, and community leaders may include, why did the officer shoot?, what was the officer's frame of mind at the time of the shooting?, and how come other methods by the officer were not attempted prior to the actions of deadly force in subduing the perpetrator? These questions are realistic but can also be misperceived by the public and many others as excessive force, after a deadly force encounter unfolds. As Rojek, et al., (2012) denoted, during these force encounters the officer and the citizen focus on different issues, each justifying their own behavior and actions through their self-prescribed roles in the encounter.

Miller (2015) explained, when officers are presented with escalation from an individual during a police-citizen encounter, the officer attempts to prevent injury or death to the suspect, the victim, and themselves. If a weapon is brandished, or not, during a police-citizen encounter that begins to escalate, officers only have mere seconds to make decisions and take swift actions to protect themselves or the public. Blair, et al., (2011) explained how situational factors play a role in the reaction time of an officer's discretion to act reasonably when presented with imminent and credible threats of violence, left officers vulnerable with little to no time to react. Blair, et al. (2011) further explained, when an officer has their weapon pointed directly at a perpetrator, even when

the perpetrator does not have a weapon pointed at the officer, reactions times vary greatly, leaving the officer extremely vulnerable and still very much in danger. However, even when no weapons are involved in these encounters' officers remain in danger due to the closeness of proximity to an individual, having even less of a reaction time and distance to react in any deliberate actions of harm from an individual.

After a fatal shooting by police occur, there is often a major outcry from anti-police activist and civil rights groups, who comment frequently about how officers are too quick to shoot perpetrators under certain situations or circumstances. Although not always clearly outlined for public purview, police-citizen encounters that deal with imminent and credible threats of violence, can sometimes end in death. In some instances, the American publics' absence in considering the situational factors of these encounters, the limited reaction times officers have, and the rapid decisions officers must reasonably make in these tense situations to protect and serve the public in a reasonable effort to prevent death. The negative public response to police-citizen deadly force encounters can strongly influence the confidence and trust American citizens have in the police, being a broader catalyst for public concern (Rojek, et al., 2012). Situational factors in police-citizen encounters concerning deadly force seek to further understand the specific situational variables that account for the dramatic fluctuation in these encounters, where deadly force is applied (Pinizzotto, et al., 2012).

Role of Media and Public Leaders

To comprehend the dynamics involved in police-citizen encounters of deadly force Thompson and Lee (2004) explained, the public should want to acquire a better

understanding of the various aspects of police work, including deadly force because it is important to maintain a well-informed community. Whether use of force by police is tolerated by the public within communities or not, a public's informed actions through political, legal, or activism can transform the ideology within an entire community (Thompson & Lee, 2004). Activist groups and movements for and against police use of force have recently been on the rise. Some new movements include such activist groups as Black Lives Matters, Blue Lives Matter, and All Lives Matter. Many of these new movements pertain to the controversial spectrum on police use of deadly force and essentially hate crimes, which include the use of perceived racial profiling by police and the recent rash of ambush killings of police officers by citizens. As these movements continue to flourish various concerns from governmental officials, political and judicial steps to combat issues of concern may result in dramatic design changes within policing and society. Depending upon the suggested reform this could hold various remedies or consequences for police and society.

The various players within American communities, such as public leaders, mass media, and the public, via social media are all players in how much the public comprehends about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters. Mass media, social media, and community leaders all play a role in influencing the community's perceptions of legitimizing police and their actions. Zillmann, (1999), denoted, when community leaders take a stance through the media against social problems, those messages are often distorted by the media using exemplification methods. This means that those original statements given by community leaders are

altered to meet the media's own persuasive agenda for public viewing, adding confusion

for the public of the intended message to be received (Cialdini, et al., 2006; Kingshott,

2011; Kunstler, 2013; Zillman, 2006). The legitimatization of law enforcement is an

essential part to public order and predominately it is the foundation to a democratic

society. Cialdini et al. (2006) pointed out that, when community leaders act publicly

against a societal problem, the public may be misguided by community leaders and the

media into believing that these problematic events are occurring more frequently within

the community.

For much of the American society an important function of community leaders is

to serve at the pleasure of the people, providing those protections for citizens under the

basic civil liberties and freedoms guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and associated

laws. The fundamental concepts of civil liberties are imperative to what this nation was

founded on, going through several decades of legislation to keep up with the evolution of

the American society in renewing those guarantees of citizens through the U.S.

Constitution. If at any time the American public believes their civil liberties are in

jeopardy, these guaranteed rights can become the center of nationwide debate. This often

leads to national political actions, movements by activist groups, widespread media on

specific infractions, and social media reports, and even community provoked riots

(Gerber & Jackson, 2017; Kunstler, 2013).

Community leaders in America at all levels of government including federal,

state, and local leaders play a major role in the public's perceptions of these civil rights

controversies. These leaders that publicly denounce civil liberty infringements through

the media, do so to normalize a social problem, dissuade a social influence, or to combat

social disobedience. However, those statements or actions by leaders are often

counterproductive and frequently induce an undesirable societal response. Similarly,

social media also plays a major contribution today in the agitation of public perception

and debate on perceived civil liberty infringements, especially when they are allegedly

done by an officer against a citizen (Gerber & Jackson, 2017).

Mass Media and Social Media

Throughout history, mass media, social media, and community leadership in the

U.S. has played a major role in defining the perceptions of the public, the laws in which

we live by, and even the ways in which the American public conducts ourselves in

everyday situations, such as in police-citizen encounters (Gerber & Jackson, 2017;

Kunstler, 2013). Reported stories on criminal activity by the media, often made viral by

the global public on social media, create a sociological chain of events for American

citizens that define public perceptions about the legitimacy of police. The more frequent

and widespread the reported event become through media and social media venues, the

more likely these reported events will create local, state, and even national public panic

(Garland, 2008; Gerber & Jackson, 2017; Kunstler, 2013). Garland (2008) denoted, it

only takes a single individual, a group of individuals, or a specific incident to create a

threat to societal values and interests, such as those repeated broadcasts of stereotypical

and alleged criminal infractions by media and within social media venues.

The co-existing relationship between law enforcement and the media has been

extensively researched under the exemplification theory to determine citizen's reception

to public safety and service messages by law enforcement. Kingshott (2011) examined the differences between the professional roles of law enforcement and the media in providing information to the public, about police use of force incidents and investigations. In addition, Kingshott (2011) questioned whether the relationship between these organizations could better serve the American public with training for media about law enforcement policy, providing a more knowledgeable and effective way to report on force encounters. The study found that a cooperative and conjunctive relationship between media and the police were plausible, if there were a greater understanding of each entity's responsibility to the public. A mutual respect for investigative protocols and parameters would benefit both organizations, enhancing the policy-specific knowledge the public obtains on police use of force encounters. The cooperative and responsible communications between media and law enforcement organizations are important, because of their unique nature in assisting and providing information to the public, before, during, and after a use of force occurrence by police.

Whether it is improving relations or providing efficient training on appropriate conduct in police-media relations, there continues to be a distortion of the facts or information received by the public through media outlets, and especially through social media. There is a shared sense of frustration among criminal justice researchers about the way's media depicts and dominates the general viewpoint of force encounters, which often distort reality (Kingshott, 2011). However, mainstream media may not be the only reason there is a disconnect in police-media relations to provide and report accurate information to the public without misrepresentation. The reporting of information that is

factual within the unique relationship between the police and media may have less to do with persuasive media tactics, and more to do with the publics' lack of policy-specific knowledge on policing policy. The message being received and interpreted by the public through media may not always be completely understood, causing misinterpretation of the intended message.

Barabas and Jerit (2009) explained, the American society's level of policy-specific knowledge on any topic involving public policy can vary greatly. The variation in knowledge can be so extreme that it merely become public opinion marching in tandem and backed by the ignorance of conceptual perceptions, not information that is factual. Oftentimes, the public acquires perceptions or conceptual viewpoints from watching media and social media reports on police use of force encounters. Differing perceptions can provoke citizens to debate on the various issues that surround police policy (Gerber & Jackson, 2017), even though they may lack the comprehension of policy-specific knowledge necessary to identify potential facts that impact or complicate policy provisions. When some members of the public conceptualize knowledge and develop specific negative perceptions about police policy, these ideologies can change an entire community's opinion about the legitimacy of policing. These negative insinuations and perceptions by the public, about the legitimacy of policing and policy, can be damaging to the important functions of law enforcement in providing a safe and secure society.

Garland (2008) described media influences as, provoking imagery depicting frequent crime occurrences within certain communities that affect specific societal values and interests. Individuals such as executives of mainstream media, public leaders,

politicians, or other socially influential individuals within a community, often report information to the public in a stereotypical fashion that exemplifies their own message to call attention to social problems (Garland, 2008; Zillmann, 2006). This type of exemplification by media and community leaders prohibit the public from gainful knowledge on reported policing incidents, stories, or policies. Audiences that are subjected to this commentary by media within communities are impacted negatively when they are misled to believe stories details are true, such as reports on police-citizen force encounters. Therefore, it is important for media and community leaders to provide precise information about police-citizen force encounters so that the public can make an informed decision about the intended purpose of policing actions.

Theories Regarding Citizen Knowledge of Police Use of Deadly Force

When it comes to police use of force and deadly force encounters there are some theories have been explored with respect to how the public perceives officers, law enforcement organizations, policing policy, and the criminal justice system. The public holds various perceptions about police and their actions. These perceptions predominately come from media reports, social media platforms, or public observations of these police-citizen force encounters. Rojek, et al. (2012) found that there were remarkable differences in individual perceptions between the police and a citizen's viewpoint regarding the same incident. Periodically some U.S. law enforcement agencies will survey the American citizens about policing performance in their communities. However, these public surveys generally overlook the contextual and cultural constructs of police-citizen encounters of force (Rojek, et al., 2012).

Gerber and Jackson (2017) assessed empirical links between police legitimacy and the public's support for police use of force of unarmed individuals. Although there were reasonable assumptions to the varied perceptions of the American public about police use of force encounters, the continued debate on the legitimacy of policing actions during force encounters are predominately high on the public interest list. Much of the debate on the legitimacy of policing practices focuses on the implicit bias in the expressed authority of officers, and an emphasis on whether officers involved in illegitimate practices are ever really held accountable for their actions (Gerber & Jackson, 2017).

The varied perceptions of American citizens about the police and their actions will probably never change because, obedience is about replacing ones' own judgements, orders, and rules, with that of someone else's to comply or submit to authority (Andrews, 2012). The differing ideology of shared beliefs about social practices, policing practices, and the appropriate order of society, police-citizen force encounters will continue to be controversial and debated for centuries to come by the public, politicians, and others that play a role in the law enforcement profession (Alpert & Smith, 2994); Andrews, 2012; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005).

Many of the organizational aspects of law enforcement have been examined thoroughly, other than its relation to citizen's knowledge on police use of deadly force and force policies. As Lee and Vaughn (2010) explained, each law enforcement agency adopts administrative policies reasonable for their individual agency to protect officers from liability in police-citizen encounters of force. Although administrative policies have

several protections for officers, these protections against civil liabilities infractions fail officers, and often increase liability for them when the agency has poor supervision, inadequate training for officers, or a basic collapse of authority with the agency. (Alpert & McDonald, 2001). Literature on police use of force and organizational functions of law enforcement fail to provide information on civil liabilities infractions to officers themselves (Lee & Vaughn, 2010). Lee and Vaughn (2010) also looked at the entire aspect of the criminal justice system and its relation to policing reforms for new policy implementation for law enforcement agencies.

To understand the American public's perceptions of policing policies, police-citizen deadly force encounters, influences of media, social media, and community leaders, theories of exemplification should be explored to determine the types of effects, if any, they have on the public's perception of police. The exemplification theory is used in the examination of relay communications of media and the types of influences these communications have on public reception (Kingshott, 2011). Understanding how the American public is influenced by media and community leaders, the role it plays on those public perceptions, and its effect on the American public's conceptual knowledge are critical when contemplating policing policy reforms.

Additionally, to fully understand the elements involved in police-citizen deadly force encounters and the clarification of the American public's policy-specific knowledge on policing policies, exploration into theories of social constructionism or social reality should be examined. The social constructionism theories will provide a better understanding of human behavior and the socialization constructs of people in the social

world. This theory and others discussed throughout this study will be useful in understanding the American public's perception, conceptual knowledge, policy-specific knowledge, and any influences on public perception, about police-citizen deadly force encounters and policing policies.

Bittner's Theory on Policing

For centuries, Bittner (1970) has been a highly recognized for his research on the sociology of policing. His research is widely credited for clarifying law enforcement principles and defining the functioning role of officers in law enforcement's organizational operations, especially in the use of force and force policy. Due to his objectiveness to take a systematic and social scientific viewpoint to understand the contemporary roles of law enforcement and their functions, Bittner (1970) works are recognized as a historical turning point in academics and law enforcement. Bittner (1970), redefined the ways in which criminological scholars explored and examined policing culture. Today his work remains highly relevant to various aspects of policing and is recognized in most criminological literature including, police use of force, generalization of police functions, organizational culture, and community-police relations.

Although a tremendous amount of progress has been made in policing over the years with the use of Bittner (1970) theories of policing, there are still debates over the forceful actions used by police in citizen-police encounters. The American public is aware that sometimes it is reasonably necessary for officers to use force, even deadly force, in police-citizen encounters for the protection of the American public and the

police. However, a marginal part of the public fails to understand the justifications of use of force in certain circumstances, particularly in situations where officers make a necessary decision to use deadly force in police-citizen encounters. As shown in Figure 2, the police continuum model, depicts the varying levels of force reasonably used by an officer corresponding to an individual's actions.
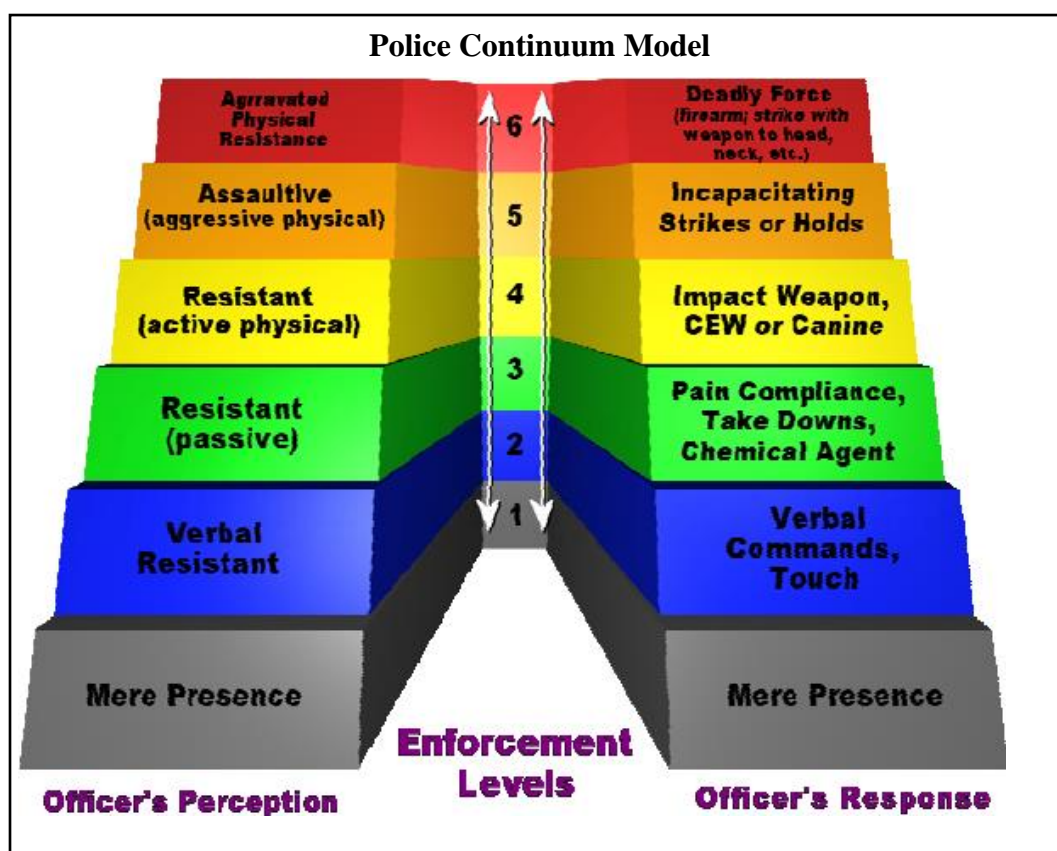

Figure 2. Police Continuum Model. From Florida Gulf Coast Univeristy Weapons and Equipment Research Institute. An information resesource for law enforcement by Wolf, Mesloh, and Henych, (2008).

Marginal groups within American society lack specific knowledge about policing policies and other legal authorities that officers can reasonably enforce during police-citizen encounters. Some of the legal obligations officers have to uphold the law is the

authority to assert varying levels of reasonable and necessary force during police-citizen encounters, and the discretion to make an effective arrest in the capacity of their duties to serve and protect the public (Barabas & Jerit, 2009; Bittner, 1970; Rojek, Alpert, & Smith, 2012). Although law enforcement has significant authority, officers are also bound by judicial laws and agency force continuum policies to ensure that their actions are reasonable and appropriate in all police-citizen encounters, including those incidents where deadly force is utilized. If police conduct themselves in a manner that is not lawful or in accordance with their agency continuum, these actions could be considered excessive or in violation of an individual's right to civil liberties.

Force policies are outlined within agency continua and are specifically tailored to the size and structure of the agency itself such as, the organizational resources, geographical locale, training skills of officers, and other factors that can vary from agency to agency and from individual state laws. Even with protections in place for both officers and citizens in force encounters, citizens are still expected to obey and comply with commands given by officers in police-citizen encounters. If a police-citizen encounter escalates to the extent that the public or officers may be in danger, police are prepared to use the force necessary to win any confrontation (Bittner, 1970; Rojek, et al., 2012).

As Bittner (1970) denotes, "every conceivable police intervention projects the message that force may be used to achieve a desired outcome" (p. 40). Due to the risk of death, the public should consider being well-informed on policing policy provided within their police agency. There should not be any misunderstanding from the public as to the

legal authority and power that police have. There is still a lot of misinterpretation by the American public about policing policies and principles, particularly in relation to policing powers and the use of deadly force.

The public's misinterpretation of policing authority may due to other current problems plaguing our society such as, the increase in mental health issues, calls for police assistance resulting in the malicious intent to ambush officers, and the epidemic drug crisis that in some instances elicit unusual erratic or aggressive behaviors from citizens. These instances can sometimes turn a simple situation into a problematic condition for the police and the public at large. However, if the public has a basic understanding of policing policies and organizational practices, it may provide the public with the policy-specific knowledge necessary to change the negative perceptions and misconceptions about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters.

Theory of Social Constructionism

The theory of social constructionism of reality is used to explain different kinds of human behaviors within the social world. Andrews (2012) explains that social constructionism originated within the field of sociology, over thirty years ago, during the post-modern era in qualitative research. The main roots of social constructionism, and the social construction of reality, come from the previous works of Karl Marx (1818-1883), who based the sociology of human knowledge in any given occurrence on the social world around them. Berger and Luckman (1966) expanded on works of Marx (1818-1883), agreeing with much of his theoretical assumptions on human knowledge and behavior. Berger and Luckman (1966) agreed, human knowledge is mainly acquired by

mutual relationships among people, and through the processes of human thoughts and vocalization of content that arises with each encounter. To understand the connection between 'reality' and 'knowledge', an in-depth qualitative analysis is predominately used to explain personal perceptions of individuals with real life experience in the social world. The social construct of reality is an extended examination into the role of knowledge and is based on the interactions of individuals and society (Andrews 2012). This helps to provide a vital and corresponding perspective of sociological understanding, as to the role of knowledge within ones' own personal identity and their social structures (Andrews, 2012; Berger and Luckman, 1996; Karl Marx, 1883).

The social construction of reality theory in this study will assist the researcher to distinguish those personal experiences, perspectives, knowledge, and perceptions individuals acquire about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters. Additionally, incomplete reporting by media, social media, or community leaders, provide an open platform for the public to challenge certain perceptions presented about policing policies and policing actions. Such social movements as Black Lives Matter, Blue Lives Matter, and All Lives Matter, that offer competing constructions of reality, often seek support for their cause from individuals whose lives already have a constructed significance in these movements in ways that go beyond media imagery or reports (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992).

To better understand the various types of perceptions that citizens have about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters, it is imperative to examine where that knowledge comes from (i.e., individual beliefs or thoughts, community

leader's commentary, social media platforms, mass media, etc.). Comprehending the ways in which the public ascertains their information about police, could be assistive to law enforcement agencies in devising educational programs for the public. These educational programs should be aimed at providing policy-specific knowledge for citizens about the use of force continuum model and its design. Educational programs should also explain to the public, the established police use of force standards that their agency uses, including how these policies are released to media organizations after police-citizen force encounters occur.

Exemplifications Theory

According to Zillmann (2006), exemplification theory addresses the "formation and modification of beliefs" about phenomena that people have experienced or witnessed, both directly and indirectly. The theories of exemplification are unique and rarely discussed in police use of force studies that examine public perceptions about police, policing policy, and other related issues such as media, social media, and community leader influences on citizen knowledge about police. Research on exemplification is generally done through sampling various individuals to determine their individual and shared experiences, including the focal characteristics of occurrences (Zillmann, 2006). Focal characteristics occur when media reports on a deadly shooting in Florida, and then several other media reports follow about similar shootings happening in other parts of the U.S. around the same time or day. These police incidents may share many of the same characteristics such as, a suspect's race, the officer's race, the amount of force used by an officer, or similar circumstances like a robbery or home invasion.

The media presents these police-citizen encounters as happening frequently, due to the media's use of repetitive and comparative characteristics of these events as exemplars to evoke public interest and concern (Gamson, et al., 1992; Zillmann, 2006). However, statistically these police-citizen force encounters are essentially a rare occurrence. When the media uses exemplars and frequently reports on similar policing occurrences for news stories, it demonstrates to the American public that there is a serious problem with an issue, such as deadly force (Gerber & Jackson, 2017; Zillmann, 2006) Typically, exemplars used by media have an evident pattern, such as reporting only on events that fit a certain profile of a group or individual to peak the American public responsiveness or anxieties.

These media reports spread swiftly through social media by the public, making community leaders step forward to assert their own comments on the public's concern about these social issues. Unfortunately, media reports sometimes give inaccurate perceptions about police-citizen deadly force encounters, causing society to perceive a conflicted reality or conceptualized knowledge about the legitimacy of policing and law enforcement actions in general (Gerber & Jackson, 2017; Zillmann, 2006).

Zillmann (2006) explained that when the media uses exemplars, those exemplars are not easily recognized by viewers but are sometimes recognizable when individuals repeat those stories narratives by media. When media chooses exemplar groupings, they are often screened to provide a magnification of sub-groupings. Such as the perception that some officers would apply deadly force during specific types of encounters, while other officers, when faced with a similar confrontation may not (Gamson, et. al., 1992;

Zillmann, 2006). Conflicting media reports and imagery provided through various types

of media venues, produce the deviations in the American public's perceptions or realities

within society. Zillmann (1999) stated, when objective information is substituted in the

public psyche by media exemplification and then expanded upon through individuals'

conceptual or personal experiences. Those individuals' perceptions and experiences are

repeatedly conveyed to others within society.

This raises the question of whether these reported accounts of reality by media are

directly responsible for raising societal concerns. Additionally, media maintains less

credibility with the American public when they interview police leadership immediately

after a police-citizen deadly force encounter, often asking leaders to make an unfounded

stance on the issue or incident begin reported by the media. Some of the public may see

these media stories as informative, others may interpret these accounts as deceptive.

These media or social media stories about police use of force are most often a reporter's

viewpoint or understanding of the issue, that include unsubstantiated comments quickly

formed by leaders on the phenomena being reported (Zillmann, 1999).

Gaps in the Literature

There are many gaps in the literature pertaining to factors that affect the ideology,

viewpoints, or perceptions the American public has about policing legitimacy, policing

policy, and police-citizen deadly force encounters (Barabas & Jerit, 2009; Campbell, et

al., 2018; Gerber & Jackson, 2017; Rojek, et al., 2012; Worden & McLean, 2016;

Zillmann, 2006). There is also an absence in the literature on educational program

development by law enforcement to address the lack of public knowledge on policing

policies and police force actions. Within the literature there is an absence of scientific

data defining the American public's conceptual and policy-specific knowledge about

policing policies as they relate to use of deadly force (Barabas & Jerit, 2009; Klinger,

2008; Sherman & Langworth, 1979; White, 2001). In this study, the primary focus is to

address the gap that exists between the American public's perceptions, conceptual

knowledge, and policy-specific knowledge of policing policies involving police force

actions. The purpose for examining this gap is to get a better understanding of whether

the American public's perceptions and knowledge are influenced by media, social media,

or community leader influences on policing policies and police-citizen force encounters.

There are few studies that qualitatively examine the American public's

perceptions and attitudes toward police (Gerber & Jackson, 2017; Hough & Tatum,

2012). There are several quantitative studies that discussed officer training and education,

data comparisons on police use of force, policing culture, racial impacts on police deadly

force, and media influences on the American public on a wide variety of issues

concerning policing policies (Barabas & Jerit, 2009; Cialdini, et at., 2006; Goddwill, et

al., 2010; Klinger, 2008; Zillmann, 2006). Much of the literature is beneficial to police

use of force studies but, there continues to be a deficiency in the public's understanding

and knowledge of these policing policies and issues.

There are still many gaps in qualitative analysis on understanding the American

public's policy-specific knowledge on the phenomenon of police use of force. Such as,

how public perceptions about policing policy and policing actions are acquired, and

whether exemplification used by media, social media, or community leaders play a role

in influencing the publics views about police and policing actions. There are also little to no studies that address whether an influential connection exists between media, social media, and community leaders on the public, altering public perspectives, conceptual knowledge, or policy-specific knowledge on policing policies or police-citizen force encounters.

The U.S. has recently experienced a vast divide in the relationship between American citizens and the police. This may be due to several public and political activist movements against policing policies surrounding the use of deadly force, due to implications by the American public that police use force unnecessarily or excessively in police-citizen encounters. Some of the American public does not agree with the opposition over police use of deadly force, especially when it is reasonably necessary to protect the American public and lives of officers involved in these encounters. While supporters of law enforcement have requested national changes to criminal justice policies, the American public has demanded reform on policing policies specific to how and when officers can apply deadly force. The activism groups against police use of deadly force want the U.S. Department of Justice to consider the humanistic perspective when approaching modifications and reforms to policing policies. The perspective from these activism groups is the reform to policing policies will help to eliminate the American public's presumption of racial profiling in police-citizen encounters.

Law enforcement supporters are requesting more protective measures for police officers involved in police-citizen encounters where deadly force used. Those protective measures by police supporters include the reduction in civil rights infractions, greater

protections for police officers, and legal sanctions for officers that use inappropriate force in situations where there wasn't a clear threat to the officer's life or someone else's. There is currently a tremendous need for additional research on a variety of aspects concerning criminal justice policies, especially those policies pertaining to the use of deadly force and police accountability. Future research should qualitatively examine and address the American public's perspectives, influences, policy-specific knowledge, and perceptions pertaining to law enforcement's policing policies on use of force.

To reduce the tensions between law enforcement and the public, addressing American citizens' fears about crime and safety, future studies on criminal justice policies concerning police-citizen deadly force encounters should focus on using a qualitative analysis (Barabas & Jerit, 2009, Gerber & Jackson, 2017). Gaining a more in-depth understanding of influences causing negative public perceptions about police, should help researchers to clarify the American public's policy-specific knowledge about policing policies and police-citizens force encounters to equally enhance any policing reforms for both citizens and the police.

Summary

Police use of deadly force has become an extremely controversial and rapidly growing conversation across the nation, dividing the American public and the police while uniting some in the name of justice (Gerber & Jackson, 2017; Campbell, et al., 2018). A portion of the public argue that the prospects of a thorough and transparent investigation by law enforcement agencies in police-citizen deadly force encounters, are seemingly unattainable. These American public perception dilemmas may be from a lack

of policy-specific knowledge regarding the process of police investigative procedures, policing agencies liabilities, or other policing policies involving police-citizen deadly force encounters.

The American public often lacks knowledge about the importance of protocols for these investigations, and the need for police to decipher evidence in accurately provide the public with a complete inquiry on potential legal liabilities and infractions. However, a percentage of the American public views these investigatory actions by law enforcement as police corruption or deceitful policing tactics, stating officers are rarely held accountable in fatal shooting encounters and are less likely to face any legal liability for their actions. These perceptions of the American public are not accurate, as officers often lose their career or receive multiple reprimands for any conduct that is unbecoming to the law enforcement profession when incidents of officer wrongdoing occur.

The recent policy changes by policing agencies providing transparency to the American public after a fatal shooting by police has left officers civilly and legally vulnerable, and their family open to possible threats of harm from the American public. There is an enormous misunderstanding from the public about "transparency" concerning the information that should, or should not, be transparent to the public without jeopardizing a police investigation, an officer's safety, or the personal rights of victims and their families. To complete proper policing investigations for fatal shootings and to meet those public standards of complying with transparency, the public should understand that law enforcement must also be cautious not to compromise policing policies of investigative protocols. These protocols are used by policing agencies in

conjunction with protecting and serving communities under the shield and privy of the profession for the protection of officers. Some policing techniques and practices should not be revealed or transparent to the public, because they give law enforcement the tools needed to apprehend criminals, to keep our communities safe, and to keep officers safe in their duties to protect and serve.

To further understand the public's perceptions or knowledge about policing polices and police-citizen encounters of force, a qualitative phenomenological approach would be the best appropriate method for analysis in understanding this phenomenon. This type of qualitative inquiry will give more of an in-depth analysis of contextual and structural accounts of participants real world experiences, through the collection of data from open-ended questionnaires, surveys, and interviews. The use of a qualitative analysis, unlike a quantitative approach, would provide information rich data on the public's policy-specific knowledge, conceptual knowledge, and perceptions as they relate to policing policy and police-citizen encounters of force. Additionally, a quantitative approach to inquiry would not be as useful to analyze the individual perceptions of real-world experiences of participants, because it only produces scientific percentages of data and does not provided for in-depth analysis of individual accounts experienced by the phenomenon.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine policy-specific, conceptual, and perceptional knowledge of citizen's regarding policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters to gain a better understanding of whether the media, social media, or community leaders influence public perceptions regarding policing policies within Palm Beach County, Florida. A phenomenological design was used because of its unique design and practicality to attain both the perceptional and conceptual knowledge of the public. It will also help in obtaining information-rich and in-depth accounts of citizens' knowledge regarding policing policies and the phenomenon of deadly force encounters, in Palm Beach County, Florida.

This study will contribute to social change by helping to enhance the public's knowledge about policing polices and police-citizen deadly force incidents, broadening their comprehension and understanding of their policing agency. It will also help to address some of the underlying concerns of citizens regarding police transparency and legitimacy, while strengthening both officer and citizen safety. Further positive social change implications of this study include enhancement to the legitimacy of policing, the reduction in community crimes, and the prospective restoration of public support for law enforcement actions, in Palm Beach County, Florida.

Campbell, et al. (2018) and, Bohrer and Infanti (2012) examined then conduct of American citizens to understand why or how some people get themselves into situations where police are obligated to use forceful actions. The phenomenon of behavioral

characteristics of citizens involved in police citizen encounters were also explored by

Terrill and Paoline (2013), to determine whether specific types of behaviors caused the

initial police-citizen encounter or, if an individual's prior criminal history played a

discriminatory role by officers to escalate the force used in those police-citizen

encounters. Aveni (2005) and Ayers (2014) discounted the primary purpose in policing

interactions with the American public, to serve and protect under oath and obligation of

the law. Lee and Vaughn (2010) depicted law enforcement as being excessively

aggressive against American citizens that are of a certain age, race, or gender. This does

not accurately represent officers during police-citizen encounters, even in escalated

encounters when it may be necessary for officers to use lethal force. When officers find

themselves in an escalated police-citizen encounter where a heightened level of force

such as lethal force must be used, generally most will act in accordance with

departmental force policies and procedures. Kahn, et al. (2016) discount the impacts and

influences of such factors as, incomplete media reports on fatal police-citizen encounters,

negative public perceptions of community-police relations, and public leaders damaging

commentary to community trust and legitimacy of police.

This study will be conducted to partially add to the experimental research of

Barabas and Jerit (2009), who found that repetitive media reports and imagery on deadly

force by police was an important component to understanding the American public's

conceptual and policy specific knowledge about police use of force. Barabas and Jerit

(2009) explained that, media exemplification of police-citizen incidents can negatively

impact the public perceptions about police-citizen encounters of force, including deadly

force, and may impact the safety, security, and crime within Florida communities. However, Barabas and Jerit (2009) did not examine the direct effects that the American public's policy-specific knowledge, conceptual knowledge, and perceptions have on actual policing policies. Therefore, this qualitative study will address that unexplored gap within their research and provide an understanding of the public's perceptional, conceptual, and policy-specific knowledge regarding policing policies pertaining to deadly force encounters. An in-depth analysis is performed of the public's policy-specific knowledge on policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters, to understand whether media, social media, or Palm Beach County community leaders influence the public's perceptions or knowledge on these issues, in Palm Beach County.

This study will involve empirical methods to develop an understanding of the real world and lived human experiences of citizens, from a unique perspective. The founder of the philosophical movement of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), believed that phenomenology was related to human consciousness and based on the meaning of an individual's experience in the real world. Individual experiences involving human perception, thought, memory, imagination, and emotion are comprised of what Husserl referred to as intentionality, an individual's directed awareness or consciousness of an object or event (Reiners, 2012). This study is designed to capture the essence of human experiences and gain a more meaningful understanding of the public's policy-specific, conceptual, and perceptual knowledge about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters, in Palm Beach County. In accordance with the defining principles of phenomenology, the philosophical assumptions in this study focus on

mutual interests of the phenomena. Which includes a person's lived experiences and a perspective that person's experiences are conscious ones, developed from the human essence of those experiences and their descriptions, not explanations or analyses (Creswell, 2013).

The research focus of this study was the public's conceptual, perceptional, and policy-specific knowledge regarding policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters in Palm Beach County, Florida. Additionally, through the researcher's examination, this study will also identify whether current media, social media, and community leaders affect the citizens knowledge or perceptions about law enforcement, policing policies, and police-citizen deadly force encounters. It was necessary for the researcher to isolate the geographical area and select individuals for this study using a stratified purposeful sampling of the population, and then use a criterion sampling of those individuals selected from the stratified sample.

This dual method of sampling was best suited for the composition of this study because it assists the researcher in achieving a diverse population, while identifying those individuals outside of the stratified purposeful sample who would best fit the criteria of the study. As Patton (2002) said, "the purpose of a stratified purposeful sample is to capture major variations rather than to identify a common core, where each stratum would constitute a fairly homogeneous sample" (p. 240). This geographical locale of Palm Beach County, Florida was chosen because of its diverse and community driven environment, its politically involved population, and the researcher's restricted inability

to travel. Therefore, the researcher found individuals for this study who were of various races, religions, genders, ages, and educational backgrounds.

Phenomenologists contend that systematic strategies for research should be followed carefully (Creswell, 2009). Using systematic strategies, researchers can scientifically expand awareness of the phenomena through deepening the meaning, while developing new discoveries on knowledge (Patton, 2010). This expansion of awareness is done through the implementation of what Patton (2010) described as a researcher's combined approach of epoche, phenomenological inquiry, imaginative variation, and a synthesis of structural and textual descriptions. In the method of epoche the researcher relies on everyday knowledge, setting aside any personal judgements. Whereas, any preconceived notions the researcher has of the phenomena can be eliminated, and collection of data seen as an indeterminate clear vantage point or transcendental viewpoint by the researcher (Patton, 2010).

Individuals selected by stratified purposeful sampling techniques for possible participation in this study have resided in Palm Beach County, Florida for at least 5 years, with no family or friends in a law enforcement position, and whom may have had experienced minor police-initiated contacts. Through stratified purposeful sampling, the researcher would like to choose varying individuals that will participate in the study that are of different educational backgrounds, races, religions, genders, and ages to ensure a diverse population for the study. After identifying individuals that fit the criterion sampling devised within this study, those individuals will then be contacted by the researcher and asked if they would be willing to participate in the study. Upon an

individual's willingness to enter the study, the researcher would then question the participant about their perceptional, conceptual, and policy-specific knowledge about police use of force policies and police-citizen force encounters through scheduled interviews and questionnaires.

The qualitative examination of the publics' policy-specific, conceptual, and perceptional knowledge about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters, will be beneficial in obtaining information rich descriptions of individual's lived experiences of the phenomena (Creswell, 2009). The data for this phenomenological study will be gathered through a combination of structured interviews and questionnaires. Data collection methods used for this study will include, informal interviews with open-ended questions, structured questionnaires, and audio-visual displays or materials designed for the comprehensive exploration of participant's perceptional, conceptual, and policy-specific knowledge about police use of polices and police-citizen deadly force encounters (Creswell, 2013). Participants will also be shown video clips of media, social media, and community leader commentary about policing policy and police-citizen force encounters and interviewed to determine if these influences play a role in an individual's perceptions or knowledge about these occurrences. The combination of interviews and questionnaires for participants will acquire a better understanding of the policy-specific knowledge or understanding participants have on policing policy and clarify any influences that affect public perceptions and conceptual knowledge about policing policy and police-citizen deadly

force encounters. The following questions are the research questions used in this

phenomenological study:

RQ1: What is citizen's understanding regarding police use of force polices and

police-citizen deadly force encounters?

RQ2: What type of influence, if any, does news media have on citizen's

perceptions and knowledge regarding policing policies or police-citizen deadly force

incidents?

RQ3: Does use-of-force post-incident opinions from media, or community leaders

regarding deadly force by police impact citizen's perceptions of use of force policies?

In this study, a combination of a stratified purposeful sampling and criterion

sampling techniques will be used to find appropriate participants. The researcher will

present and poll 40 individuals with a purposeful stratified questionnaire to find and

obtain the 25 participants necessary for this study. For the recruitment and selection of

participants, the researcher will use a public park within Palm Beach County to obtain

individuals that may be good qualifying candidates for this study. The researcher will

randomly choose participants, from the purposeful stratified questionnaire conducted,

that meet study criteria and represent the overall population within Palm Beach County,

Florida.

Through the process of stratification, the researcher will be able to find and select

individuals who meet study criteria and eligibility requirements, located with the

geographical area for this study. The researcher's obligation would be to identify and

choose those specific individuals that are available and willing to participant within the

study who meet the criteria devised for this study. This criterion would include selecting various individuals from differing educational backgrounds, gender, age, race, and religion, to ensure a diverse population for the study. Additionally, individuals chosen by the researcher and determined eligible to participate should provide their permission for participation in the study, their release of contact information to the researcher and their willingness to participate in the study, prior to the commencement of the study. The use of a release of information form provides added protection and discretion to both the researcher and participants, throughout the entire study process.

In this phenomenological study, sample size appropriate for this research was determined by examining stratified purposeful sampling and criterion sampling strategies suitable for the researchers anticipated time with participants, the researcher's availability of resources, and the overall purpose of the study (Patton, 2002). In a qualitative design there is no specific requirements for determining a sample size or population. The use of randomization for probability sampling strategies in this study would not accommodate the in-depth purpose to inquiry, the credibility of lived experiences by participants, or the time and resources available to the researcher necessary for this study. Therefore, the researcher chose the recommended sample size denoted by Creswell (2009) for this study and devised a sample size that will consist of a maximum of 25 participants. This sample size was chosen so that the researcher can properly allow participants sufficient time to share their lived experiences, giving explanation to their own perceptions and knowledge about policing policy and police-citizen deadly force encounters, as well as any influences that may or may not have contributed to those perspectives. A smaller sample

size will also help to reduce research bias and generalizations from data collected and to ensure validity in this study (Creswell, 2009).

The relationship between saturation (generalizations, bias, content validity) and sample size is important to the validity, reliability, and quality of the study's outcome. The sample size chosen in this study was determined by several factors that include, the researchers time to conduct every individual interview, the availability of participants, and the research design for the collection of data to achieve saturation. There is no specific or defined method in achieving enough data for saturation. As Mason (2010) explained, samples should be large enough to obtain all necessary information from participants, but not too large to make the data seem as though it is repetitive. If the sample size is too small or participants chose to opt-out of the study, saturation would be beneficial in finding the appropriate number of participants still needed to conclude the research. Devising the appropriate sample size to assist in saturation is very important because, as Fusch and Ness (2015) point out, the failure to research data saturation will impact the quality of the study and hamper content validity.

In this study, the sample size of 25 is likely more than enough to reliability obtain a consensus from data collected (Mason, 2010). Additionally, the use of epoche will be utilized in this phenomenological study, to also assist with any issues of saturation within this study.

Research Design

This study will use stratified purposeful sampling strategies in conjunction with criterion sampling. The stratified purposeful sampling strategies will help in the

identification and selection of information-rich cases and assist in the generalization of the overall population. The implementation of criterion sampling will be particularly useful in allowing the researcher to select those individuals from the stratified purposeful sample that fit the criteria devised in the study, to provide a more decisive explanation of the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2009). The use of a secondary sampling for this research is to obtain individuals that fit the criterion of the study, to make sure that there is certainty in selection of cases that may be information-rich and thick, so that the researcher can reveal public knowledge or perceptual weaknesses and to discover opportunities for educational public programs or policing improvements (Patton, 2010). This study's phenomenological method to inquiry will assist in providing quality assurance of the data, while giving participant's the ability to understand multiple co-constructive realities of the phenomenon.

The phenomenological paradigm in this study allows for an emergent design that allows the researcher to respond to the various realities and experiences of the study, but not to interject personal realities or experiences. As Reiners (2012) points out, this chosen paradigm is consistent with the needs required for this study and provides for the development of in-depth textual and structural descriptions for, a reflective analysis that portrays the essence of lived experiences of participants. This study's perspective lens will be limited to citizens within Palm Beach County, and therefore will not provide an overall representation of the public's knowledge and perceptions about policing policy or police-citizen deadly force encounters throughout the United States. The participants will be selected based on a stratified purposeful criterion sampling specific to this study, and

the researcher will ensure there is no known or prior relationship with individuals that are willing to participate in this research. The researcher will conduct a stratified purposeful strategy in finding participants, then choose individuals from that selected population that have a variation of diversity in race, gender, age, religion and educational background that fit the criteria (race, gender, age, religion, and various educational backgrounds) and generalization of the population designed in this study.

Rationale for Use of Qualitative Phenomenological Design

In previous studies on police use-of-force, researchers have primarily utilized quantitative, experimental, or mixed method research methodologies (Alpert & McDonald, 2001; Barabas & Jerit, 2009; Brandi & Stroshine, 2013; Campbell, et al., 2018; Gerber & Jackson, 2017). In the use of quantitative methods, theoretical generalizations with numerical and statistical data analysis are tested through the collection of data in questionnaires, surveys, or polls, using computational techniques. Quantitative research is generally devised under a mathematical inquiry to data, testing probabilities rather than exploring the unique nature of real-world experiences (Creswell, 2009). A quantitative analysis would not be sufficient for the focus of this study, which aims to inquire about the in-depth and information rich perceptions and knowledge of the public about policing policy and police-citizen deadly force encounters, including factors that may influence those perceptions and knowledge. A qualitative method is necessary to examine the detailed individual perspectives of common realities in participants lived experiences, not to generalize the phenomena through statistical data (Creswell, 2009; Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2010; Reiners, 2012). The phenomenological paradigm chosen

for this study is pertinent to the exploration into the various types of perceptions and knowledge the public has about policing policy and police-citizen deadly force encounters. This phenomenological paradigm will also be useful in examining, identifying, clarifying, and defining any influential factors that may contribute to the ways in which the public attains their perceptions and knowledge about policing policy and police-citizen encounters of deadly force.

Although a case study and narrative inquiries are qualitative methods too, these methods would not be appropriate for this type of study design either. The type of investigations in a case study often focus on one individual, a specific group of individuals, or an event. In a narrative research study, the inquiry seeks to understand the way people create meaning in their lives (Creswell, 2013). Due to the limited scope of inquiry that these types of research designs provide, neither would not be beneficial in the examination of the public's perceptions and knowledge about policing policy, or what influences that knowledge and perceptions, and could affect the quality, reliability, and content validity of this study. Like the case study and narrative methods to inquiry, an ethnography or hermeneutic study would also limit the validity and the scope of this study. An Ethnography inquiry generally focuses on a subgroup of individuals or a specific culture, and a hermeneutic inquiry suggests that interpretation is constructed within language (Creswell, 2009; Creswell, 2013). Neither one of these methods to inquiry would be beneficial in answering the research questions posed here within this study.

Participant Selection

In this phenomenological research, the target population to be selected will consist of citizen that are both male and female, between the ages of 25-55, with various backgrounds in education or are non-educated, are of any race or religion, with no family or friends associated to the law enforcement profession, have had only minor police-initiated contacts with police, and who reside within Palm Beach County, Florida for at least 5 years. The researcher chose this criterion to ensure that participants will have varied recollections or experiences through media, social media, or with community leaders. As well as having a basic or intricate understanding, knowledge, or perceptions about the occurrences involving policing policy and police-citizen deadly force encounters.

This criteria for participants was selected because the researcher would like a diverse population for inquiry that includes individuals from various backgrounds that are known to be familiar with law enforcement, media, social media, and community leaders, and that represents the general population within Palm Beach County, Florida. The primary focus of this study is to explore citizen knowledge and perceptions about policing policy and police-citizen encounters, to determine whether their knowledge or perceptions are influenced or altered by media, social media, or community leader imagery and commentary. Therefore, obtaining diverse participants based on a stratified purposeful sampling based on a criterion sampling selection technique, will be beneficial to this study.

As stated previously in this research, the sample size for this study will consist of 25 participants, to reduce generalization, improve reliability, and to ensure content validity. According to Patton (2010), a smaller number of participants are favorable in phenomenology when conducting a study that is aimed at obtaining information rich or in-depth information from participants. Furthermore, the willingness of individuals to participate in this research and to express their experiences or thoughts about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters is not of concern to the researcher because, currently the public actively expresses their opinions and concerns freely and repetitively about these matters. However, if an issue does arise with individuals selected for this study or the researcher finds that an individual lacks the criteria designed in this study to participate, the researcher will use saturation methods to randomly seek out alternative prospective individuals that fit the criteria design for this study.

If individuals selected for participation in the study spontaneously decide to opt out of the study, saturation methods will be applied to ensure the quality and content validity of the study and to obtain in-depth and information rich data necessary in the collection of data. Alternatively, if the researcher has difficulty with randomly locating willing participants for this study, the researcher will extend the search for various public places within Palm Beach County that could be used to poll individuals for participation for this study.

Data Collection Procedures

A social constructionism approach will be applied to data collection procedures in this study, allowing multiple realities and implications of public perceptions and

knowledge to be constructed by participants, permitting their lives and interactions with others to emerge (Patton, 2010). By comparing the textual and structural descriptions provided by participants, the data will emerge capturing the information-rich or in-depth accounts of the phenomena (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, through using combined stratified purposeful and criterion sampling strategy for the selection of participants, it will assist in producing relevant outcomes making it easier to summarize and compare data collected. Creswell (2013) explains that, "the important point is to describe the meaning of the phenomenon for a small number of individuals who have experienced it" (p. 161). Therefore, this type of sampling method for this study is necessary to enhancing the credibility of data, and for providing those information-rich textual and structural details with a smaller sample size, without generalizing about the entire population. Due to the population being much larger than this specific study can handle, participants would best be selected using a random purposeful sampling and then applying a criterion sampling method, to ensure individuals fit study criteria but are also a diversified selection (Patton, 2010). Furthermore, the use of a matrix may also be useful in data collection to infer the complexity of the phenomena and to assist the researcher with inquiry (Korb, 2012).

In this study the use of open-ended interviews, open-ended and structured questionnaires, and short video clips will be utilized by the researcher, with individualized time spent one-on-one with each participant. The duration of time spent with participants may vary due to circumstances such as, an individual's comprehension of questions, individual's personal interpretation, knowledge or understanding on

policing policy, the conceptual and perceptional descriptions an individual has about police-citizen encounters of deadly force, and individual's experiences or perceptions about media, social media, or community leader influences. The use of open-ended interviews is necessary for the researcher to be able to ask probing type questions during the interviews, to understand participants perceptual, conceptual, and policy-specific knowledge about policing policies and police use of deadly force.

The use of short video clips on deadly force followed by structured questionnaire's will also be useful in individual interviews to clarify participants perceptional and conceptual knowledge. This will assist with determining whether participants views have changed in compared to their original answers given in the initial interview. Evaluating previous data collected from those initial interviews along with participants questionnaires after viewing imagery and commentary from the video clips, will help the researcher to gain a better understanding of influences that may affect participants perceptional, conceptional, or knowledge about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters. The short video clips on police-citizen deadly force encounters will be collected and compiled by the researcher from various media outlets and social media platforms and will contain imagery and commentary from local news media, social media sites from Facebook, and various community leaders (law enforcement, mayor, local council members, senate, or house of representatives, etc.) about police use of deadly force.

Prior to initial interviews researcher will explain briefly to selected individuals about the purpose of the study and informed about all documents concerning their rights

and responsibilities in their willingness to consent to the participation in the study. All individuals that are willing to participate in the study will then be given appropriate documentation and consent forms to sign demonstrating their willingness to participate in the study. Those participants will then be verbally briefed by the researcher on such information as, the contractual agreement for their willingness and consent to participate in the study, the title of the study, purpose of the study, the researchers name and contact information, any opportunities to withdraw consent for their participation in the study at any time, and the participant's right to withdraw consent for any video or audio recording, and the right to review their transcribed interview to ensure researcher has recorded their data correctly.

Upon exiting the study, the researcher will also debrief participants regarding their voluntary participation in the study and verbally explain what occurs upon the completion of their participation, including obtaining copies of their transcribed data and how to obtain a completed copy of study results. During the debriefing procedures the researcher will verbally explain and provide participants with, a written copy of the study title, the researchers name and contact information, the purpose and aim of the study, and offer information about how to obtain a copy of their transcribed data and a copy of study results. Each participant will be thanked for their invested time and participation in the study. Although there should not be any need for a follow-up interview in this study, however, if it becomes necessary to contact participants the researcher would directly contact individuals for any clarifications to statements given during the interview process. If necessary, after any follow up questions are asked by the researcher, individuals would

be thanked again for their participation in the study, offered information about how they can obtain a copy of the study, and researcher would verbally reiterate the individual's rights for both withdrawal and participation in the study.

Role of Researcher

For this study, the researcher assumes that the public is widely influenced by media, social media, and community leader commentary when police-citizen deadly force encounters occur and repetitively publicized. The researcher also assumes that all information given to the researcher by participants are true and correct to their knowledge. It is also assumed in this study that the public's perceptional and conceptual interpretations of those occurrences of police-citizen encounters of deadly force are not based on policy-specific knowledge, and that the public has little to no knowledge about policing policy or law enforcement procedures of investigation. The researcher does not have any biases about law enforcement or the ways in which the public perceives law enforcement. There is only a desire on behalf of the researcher to understand how miscommunications occur between the public and police, and why certain perceptions are formed about policing policy and law enforcement's use of force actions. In addition, as many criminology researchers have searched for a greater understanding of these complex issues that surround police use of force, this researcher would like to add to the conversation by understanding the public's perceptions and knowledge about this controversial subject matter. Therefore, the researcher's expectations in this study is to add to the literature on police use of force, by selecting a diversely rich participant pool for looking at the public's perspective in understanding this phenomenon.

The primary role of the researcher in this study is, to remain objective through isolating any personal beliefs or preconceived notions in this research. This would include the researcher isolating those beliefs and preconceived notions from the participants perceptional, conceptual, or policy-specific knowledge on policing policy and police-citizen deadly force encounters, as well as participants considerations of influences that media, social media, or community leaders may have on those perceptions or knowledge. Additionally, to ensure objectivity by the researcher is achieved the use of bracketing or epoche will be used, allowing the emergence of data from participants viewpoints and experiences about the phenomena, through the interpretation of the researcher (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2010). Maintaining researcher objectiveness is important and therefore, the researcher's key function will be to exclusively focus on the participants beliefs, thoughts, and interpretations of their experiences on the phenomena.

Throughout the research process, the researcher should keep appropriate records and notes on participants accounts of the phenomena and preserve all interview recordings, transcriptions of interviews, and observation field notes to ensure the accuracy of the data. The researcher should also keep a personal journal for reflections and insights about the study, in addition to the researcher demonstrating bracketing efforts. Through using bracketing or epoche, the researcher will remain an outside observer and will not assume the role of individuals under study. Through keeping a separate journal, the researcher will be able to describe relevant personal aspects or experiences from conducting the study. As Creswell (2013) explains, the best writing acknowledges the researchers position in the study for reflexivity, so that the researcher

can be self-conscious about how their experiences may potentially shape the findings or interpretations within the study. Ultimately, a reflective inquiry model should be included by a qualitative researcher, because the researcher has an obligation to sufficiently report details of the data collection process and its analysis. The purpose of this is to allow the readers to reliably justify the quality of the results or findings of the research (Patton, 2010).

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis techniques were used in this study and data was retrieved through participants interviews, questionnaires, researchers' observational notes and transcribed interview material, will be conducted by researcher using Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological process to inquiry. In Colaizzi's process to inquiry there are seven basic steps that include, (1) collection and transcription of data to be analyzed; (2) extraction and formulation of significant meanings; (3) creating a coding system to distinguish formulated meanings; (4) devising themes from formulated statements; (5) developing a comprehensive description of experiences articulated by participants; (6) interpreting the analyses of symbolic representations; and (7) identifying fundamental essences of the phenomenon in an exhaustive description (Edward & Welch, 2011). Using this descriptive phenomenological method to inquiry, assisted the researcher in analyzing information rich data from participants who expressed their individual experiences using typical everyday language. The triangulation of qualitative data sources such as, observations, interviews, transcribed data, and questionnaires, were

important for the comparison of data with detailing any consistencies within the data about the phenomena (Patton, 2010).

Triangulation in this study was used to ensure that research findings were well developed, comprehensive, and information rich. For this study, participants were able to review their transcribed interviews to ensure researcher accuracy of statements and the credibility of study findings. This method is often referred to as triangulation member checks. After individual interviews, the researcher transcribed all information and statements obtained in the interview by the participant and ask that the participant check the transcribed documents to make sure all statements made to the researcher were recorded with accuracy. The study review offered to each participant by the researcher helped to confirm that the researcher had correctly evaluated the data collected, and that information contained within they study is accurate, valid, complete, and a fair analysis of participants representation of the phenomena. Checking data with participants within the study, and from those outside the study, to compare those perspectives against other data collection materials was helpful to the researcher to corroborate the information given by participants through their interviews (Patton, 2010).

This type of cross checking of data was to ensure reliability and often is referred to by researchers as the re-test method, inter-rater, or intra code reliability (Creswell, 2009). These methods tested the external consistency of triangulation methods and its reliability within participants interviews. Patton (2010) explained that different kinds of data collection instruments capture various types of data which shows overall patterns of either consistency, differences, or reasonable explanations in data from different sources

which contribute significantly to overall credibility in the findings. The transferability of study data was performed by evaluators (such as University committees) who thoughtfully extrapolate from the study's findings, to point out lessons learned or potential applications for future efforts (Patton, 2010).

The researcher used a qualitative software program to analyze data collected from participants in this study, in addition to Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological process to inquiry. This helped to further assist the researcher in determining the accuracy of data collected. The use of a qualitative software program referred to as, AQUAD Seven, was used for assisting the researcher in the development of themes in the data collected from participants interviews and questionnaires. AQUAD Seven is a computer program specifically designed to assist researchers with organizing data in qualitative studies, by coding the data for the enhancement of developing themes or patterns that may be beneficial in devising a better understanding of the researcher's data collected (Creswell, 2009). The AQUAD Seven program is meant to assists researchers with the reconstruction of case structures based on strict hypothesis testing and it supports a variety of different kinds of data collected such as documents, imagery, audio, and visual data. The utilization of this qualitative software program in this study will be beneficial for enhancing the quality of the study by finding patterns and themes within the data, that the researcher may have otherwise missed.

Informed Consent and Ethical Considerations

Individual's for this study were located by using a stratified purposeful sampling method for a specific criterion based on this study's design. Once a potential participant

pool was selected through a poll conducted by researcher of 40 individuals, the researcher then used a criterion sampling technique to identify those individuals that specifically meet the criteria of the study design. The research also wanted to ensure that individuals selected for the participant pool consisted of a diverse group of participants, to enhance the quality of the study. A copy of a confidentially agreement was provided by the researcher and given to participants for their role in the study and to retain for their records, to assist with issues of liability, confidential, and to account for any ethical concern's individuals had. Once an individual demonstrated a willingness to participate in the study, the researcher then recorded all data provided by participants as anonymous by assigning each participant a random number. This was to ensure that participants personal information and all data collected from that individual participant remained confidential throughout the study by the researcher. Therefore, to the best of the researcher's ability all ethical concerns and considerations were addressed related to participants privacy, agency's recruitment of participants, and all materials related to this study, throughout the entire research process.

The participants in this study were chosen through stratified purposeful selection based on a criterion sampling method, and an individual's willingness to participate in the study was not purposely denied by the researcher due to their race, religion, age, sex, or educational background. The researcher aimed for diversity within the final pool of participants selected for the study, such as varying participants with differing age, race, gender, religion, and educational background. Individual's that demonstrated a willingness to participate within the study was provided with details about approximately

how long interviews would take, where interviews would take place, dates in which interviews would occur, and the researcher's contact information. Prior to an individual's participation in this study the researcher prepared and reviewed documents with participant's which include, the purpose of the study, a voluntary consent form, a voluntary consent for audio and visual recordings, participants right to withdrawal from the study, and participants right to not sign any documentation for consent. The processes of informed consent were critical to this study because it gave participant's an understanding of the study, acknowledged to participants that they are the most important part of the study, and it defined their role in the study and their willingness to participate. All forms created by the researcher and presented to individuals demonstrated a willingness to participate in the study, were solely based on the approval of Walden University or IRB committee members. Participants received a copy of their voluntary consent forms and any other necessary documentation requested by participants, and the originals were retained by the researcher for documentation of such consents.

Just as individuals voluntarily joined the study, they could also withdraw their voluntary consent at any time during the study. The researcher did not influence or try to convivence individuals to participate within the study if they choose to withdraw their voluntary consent. If any participant choose to withdraw from the study, the researcher verbally reviewed all documentation that was previously provided to participants for their consent, including the participants right to withdrawal from the study, participants right to not sign any documentation for consent, and the researcher thanked the participant for their time invested in the study. For participants that choose to withdrawal early from the

study, the research was responsible for immediately conducting saturation methods to ensure validity, quality, and reliability of the research study and addressing these concerns prior to proceeding with the study (Patton, 2010). Participants were treated with respect and were not pressured by the researcher, or anyone else, at any time for their participation or non-participation in this study.

Interviews with participants in this study took place at a local library that is centrally located in Palm Beach County, for participant and researcher convenience and provides a safe, neutral, and comfortable environment. Due to the flexible hours of the library (10:00am-9:00pm, Monday thru Thursday; 10:00am-6pm, Friday; 10:00am-5pm, Saturday; and 12:00pm-5pm, Sunday) it allowed for participants to have greater availability in scheduling appropriate and convenient times with little to no interference on individual's own personal daily schedules. All interviews with participants took place in the available public conference room located within the library and required participate and researcher corroboration. The duration of time with participants for interviews were (approximately 4-5 hours) in length, the researcher offered small breaks and refreshments to assist in combating mental fatigue and keeping participants refreshed and focused on the subject matter.

After the initial interview a secondary portion to interview occurred in which, research prepared short video clips to be played for participants, and during these down times refreshments and breaks helped to keep participants engaged and occupied. The researcher provided individual participants with a one-time $10.00 gas card to partially compensate individuals for their commute to and from the interviewing site (the local

library). In conclusion to the interview, participants were thanked for their participation, reminded of their voluntary consent and rights to withdraw from the study at any time, informed on how they could receive a copy of the study's findings, and were provided with the researchers contact information again for any follow-up questions or concerns participants may have.

Another concern for both researchers and participants in any study was the ethical considerations on how data would be stored, the location in which data was stored, and who would have access to that data. The data acquired and obtained by the researcher for this study was properly stored within a single password protected computer, that is safely secured in a locked home office at the researcher's residence. To ensure the security of data, the researcher preformed monthly changes to the password to reduce any vulnerabilities and to ensure the data was protected from any possible intrusions. Additionally, collected data in this study was represented by a number coding system to ensure that participants personal information would not be easily identifiable to others. Due to the proposed sensitivity of the subject matter in this study, the researcher properly addressed any concerns related to privacy or fear of retaliation that participants might have had in this study. The researcher ensured that participants would not be placed into any situation throughout this research where any such risk of physical or psychological harm would occur. However, if a participant believed they had a valid concern the researcher provided exponential resources to individuals from recommendations made by the researcher's Walden University or IRB committee members.

Moreover, all files related to this study including collected data, video and audio files, all study information of the researcher's, and participant information was kept on a password protected computer and was only accessible by the researcher. When the researcher was not accessing the computer for the purposes of research, and the computer remained in the researcher's locked home office. All data collected from this study will be retained by the researcher for two years, after the conclusion and publication of the study. After this two-year period of retention all files that include, participants collected data, forms and other documentation of consent, audio and visual files, or any other data files related to this study will be permanently deleted from the researcher's computer. In addition to any informed consent and ethical considerations, anonymity of individuals within the study were critical, and the researcher applied all security measures including, passwords, coding options, and proper scheduling of interviews to ensure anonymity with each participant.

Summary

The public's perceptions and knowledge about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters is controversially complex with multi-leveled dynamics that are involved, including the prospects of media, social media, and community leader influences. Although this research sustained some limitations in determining the public's conceptual, perceptional, and knowledge about policing policies regarding citizen deadly force encounters, and what may influence public perceptions about police throughout the geographically region of the U.S. This subject matter was explored extensively to the best of this researcher's ability. The researcher's reasoning behind conducting this study was

to begin a new conversation about public knowledge on policing policies and to contribute to the academic research that addresses current social concerns over police-citizen relations and police-citizen deadly force encounters. To provide positive social change by initiating a constructive conversation to a better and more constructive means to establishing effective policing reforms.

The phenomenological design for this study was devised to extensively explore citizen's perceptional, conceptual, and policy-specific knowledge about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters. To understand how the citizen's, interpret these policies and if exemplification used by media, social media, or community leaders play a role in influencing public perceptions about law enforcement actions. With this design, it permitted the researcher to explore the "lived" experiences of individuals to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon through the development of those descriptions of the essences that individuals experienced (Creswell, 2013). The design devised for this study was uniquely structured to provide information rich and in-depth analysis of structural and textual descriptions by individuals of this phenomenon. In combination to the specifically detailed design of this study, a descriptive seven step data coding strategies of Colaizzi (1978) were used to permit participants to express themselves by using everyday language, simplifying data for the use in the emergence of themes and patterns (Reiners, 2012).

In reviewing the literature on police use of force, this study is the first of its kind to examine the public's perceptional, conceptional, and policy-specific knowledge about policing policy and police-citizen deadly force encounters. To understand whether

exemplification from media, social media, or public leaders' commentary influence the citizen's opinions about law enforcement actions. This study was given a freshly enhanced perspective about how public perceptions about law enforcement actions are formed, how public knowledge is attained on policing policy, and what kinds of influences may play a role in citizen's perceptional, conceptual, and policy-specific knowledge about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters.

There are a variety of positive social change implications for this study that include, the enhancement to the legitimacy of policing, the reduction of community crime rates, an increase in the public's trust of the police and policing actions meant to serve and protect communities, and restoring the overall public support for law enforcement officers within Palm Beach County communities. Any expansions to this research for future research studies will also assist social scientist, criminologist, leadership in law enforcement or other professionals to development better standards in the creation of public educational materials and programming. It will also help in the development of any proposed improvement to policing policies or reforms, under the future expectations or policy-specific knowledge of public input. This study should be very beneficial in guiding future researchers on the basic meanings of public perceptions, conceptions, and policy-specific knowledge about policing policy and police-citizen deadly force encounters, as well as providing a baseline to media, social media, and public leaders influences on public perceptions about law enforcement actions.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to examine policy-specific, perceptional, and conceptual knowledge that the public has about policing policy and police-citizen deadly force encounters to get a better understanding of whether media, social media, or community leaders influence or impact the knowledge citizens have about policing policies within Palm Beach County, Florida. A unique phenomenological paradigm was designed for its practicality to attain both perceptional and conceptual knowledge of citizens through obtaining information rich and in-depth accounts of individuals' knowledge about policing policies and the phenomenon of police-citizen deadly force encounters. Implications for positive social change regarding citizen's knowledge about police use of force policies and deadly force encounters are crucial to the enhancement of the legitimacy of policing, reduction of community crimes, and restoration of public support for law enforcement actions within Palm Beach County.

Chapter 4 includes findings from interviews that were conducted with citizens within Palm Beach County, Florida. Those citizens who qualified for participation in the study were later asked by the researcher about policy-specific, perceptional, and conceptual knowledge regarding police use of force policies that relate to deadly force encounters and if their opinions about these issues were based on any outside influence, such as the media, social media, or community leaders. This work represents an in-depth exploration of citizen's lived experiences involving policy-specific, perceptional, and conceptual knowledge regarding policing policies and police-citizen deadly force

encounters within Palm Beach County, Florida. It also demonstrates whether media, the social media, community leaders, or any other influences effect individual's perception on policing policy, resulting in an information-rich description of this phenomenon in Chapter 5.

The data collection methods used in this study were interviews consisting of a two-part probe of a series of open-ended questions, the first half of the interview involving an open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix A). The second half of the same interview involved showing participants short video clips, which were followed by open-ended questions (see Appendix B). This design was used to gain an enhanced comprehensive exploration of citizen's knowledge regarding police use of force policies through comparing initial responses to the second responses which involved reflecting on initial questions after videos were presented. Data combined with probing analysis during in-depth interviews provided the basis for analytical data assessed in this chapter as well as academic themes.

The following research questions were foundational for questions asked during in-depth interviews conducted during this phenomenological study:

RQ1: What is citizen's understanding about police use of force policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters?

RQ2: What type of influence if any does news media have on citizen's perceptions and knowledge regarding policing polices or police-citizen deadly force incidents?

RQ3: Do use-of-force, post incident opinions from the media or community leaders regarding deadly force by police impact citizen's perceptions of use of force policies?

Overview

Participants in this study were selected by originally conducting a recruitment questionnaire with closed responses (see Appendix C) that was completed at Scott's Place, a public park located within Palm Beach County, Florida. Individuals then were randomly selected based on the criteria and responses for participation. After participants were selected and prior to conducting individual in-depth interviews, the researcher thanked the participants for their time and willing participation. Each participant was then given a brief introduction to the issues that were discussed and explored during the interview process. The participants were informed by the researcher that they would be recorded during the interview and get a copy of the transcription after their interview was complete for their review. All participants were informed by the researcher that they could withdraw their participation at any time for any reason.

The interviews were conducted at the local public library in a small conference room available for public use, and in-depth interviews involved audio recordings of conversations that were later transcribed by the researcher. During each individual interview, the researcher would repeat back comments to participants to understand their meaning and ask follow-up questions to clarify implications as appropriate. After interviews were conducted, the researcher transcribed interviews and then transcriptions

were sent via email, as preferred by participants, for review and editing. Among the 19 participants, two did return their transcription with some minor grammatical corrections. The researcher applied those edits.

A structured interview process was used during in-depth interviews to ensure there was consistency in the interview process and interview protocols were followed. The researcher designed probing and delving questions to explore various types of knowledge about the phenomenon to identify and define influential factors that may contribute to understanding the topic further, in an attempt to document appropriate textual, structural, and information rich meanings of live experiences, as described in chapter three. The longest interview lasted for 130 minutes, and the shortest interview lasted for about 90 minutes. The average time that most of the in-depth interviews lasted was 120 minutes.

The recruitment of participants in this study took approximately 5 months. Due to the researcher not being bilingual, there were some population delimitations that had to be adjusted (i.e., participants should speak and understand English). Population delimitations will be outlined in further detail within the limitations of this study along with suggestions for future research. The researcher did certify that all participants met requirements for participation, and afterwards participants were then contacted by the researcher to make appointments for face-to-face interviews at the local public library. There were three participants who had some scheduling issues due to either work or family. Those participants were willing to reschedule interviews with the researcher at a more convenient time for their participation due to individual circumstances, and the

researcher tried to be as accommodating as possible to each participant who expressed scheduling concerns.

The goal of this study was to examine and understand public knowledge and perceptions about policing policies pertaining to use of deadly force. The initial participant recruitment questionnaire (see Appendix C) used in this study to recruit individuals to participate and interview participants met the objectives of this study. Therefore, there were no changes that were necessary for the original recruitment questionnaire, or the first and second phase interview questions.

The data collection process started with randomly selecting individuals through personal contacts at Scott's Place. The researcher identified herself and gave a short description of the recruitment questionnaire along with a brief explanation of the purpose of the study to individuals. Then, the researcher gave individuals the option to fill out the recruitment questionnaire to see if they fit the criteria for the study and would be willing to participate in the study, as described in Chapter 3. Potential contacts who fit study criteria were contacted by the researcher through individually preferred personal contact information given on the recruitment questionnaire, either by phone or email. They were then invited to participate in the in-depth interviews which were held at the local public library in a private conference room. The researcher then asked prospective participants for times and dates that were convenient for them to schedule interviews. Prior to conducting interviews, the researcher thanked participants for their participation, explained the consent form process, asked permission to record interviews for the purpose of transcription, and asked participants if they had any questions or concerns

before starting. After interviews, taped conversations were then transcribed by the researcher and sent to participants for validation prior to analyzing the data.

Colzizzi's descriptive seven step phenomenological process model was used to conduct the analysis of data. This is a seven step process to inquiry: (1) collection and transcription of data; (2) extract and formulate significance of meanings; (3) create a coding system to distinguish formulated meanings; (4) devise themes from formulated statements; (5) develop a comprehensive description of experiences articulated by participants; (6) interpret and analyze symbolic representations; and (7) identify fundamental essences of the phenomenon in an exhaustive description (Edward & Welch, 2011).

In the first step the collection and transcription of data was performed during the interview process and immediately after. With each interview the data was read and reread to frame an understanding of information rich details that were both textual and structural of the participant's words, meanings, and experiences. This process assisted in attaining the essence of what participants were communicating to the researcher. After each interview, data was transcribed by the researcher and then sent to the participant so that the transcription could be checked for accuracy by the respective participant.

In the second step, the extraction and formulation of significant meanings, the information rich and in-depth data was extracted from the interview data. Data was extracted by locating and formulating any significant meanings in the participants transcripts into groups. Each participant's statements were read and reread by the

researcher to find any significant statements that were directly related to the main

research questions and the phenomenon.

In the third step, creating a coding system to distinguish formulated meanings,

participant statements were reread to formulate more specific statements and meanings

from the participants narratives. Those significant statements that directly connected to

the main research questions of this study were coded using a numeric system and entered

to represent an assembly of relevant significant statements. Some new meanings were

identified in the narratives. The new statements identified that were considered

significant were added to the existing ones through the modification of existing

significant statements based on a close examination of the supporting data.

In the fourth step, creating a coding system to distinguish formulated meanings,

the researcher began to formulate significant statements into prospective meanings.

Those meanings were then formulated into groups of similar types and coded into

clusters of themes. The coded data was then put into the AQUAD Seven database to see

if any other themes would emerge that had not previously been identified through coding

the data by hand. There were no themes that had emerged that hadn't previously been

identified.

The fifth step, devising themes from formulated statements, included developing

an exhaustive and comprehensive description of the experiences explained by

participants. This was done through blending theme clusters and their associated

formulated meanings that were explained by the researcher. The themes formulated were

also put into the AQUAD Seven qualitative software database, to see if any additional

themes would emerge that the researcher might have missed by hand calculations. The AQUAD Seven qualitative software database found themes that were already identified by the researcher, through coding by hand, and no new themes were identified during this process.

The sixth step, interpreting the analyses of symbolic representations included the interpretive analysis by the researcher of symbolic representations, both verbal and non-verbal meanings of interviews with participants. This process provided a level of closure to the analysis process and completed the refining of significant statements, their meanings, and existing themes. All themes appeared to be relevant, but in this process, it became evident that if any existing themes did not match or stood out, they could be reconsidered and adjusted at this point. The researcher did not make any changes to existing themes and no adjustments were necessary.

In the seventh step, identifying fundamental essences of the phenomenon in an exhaustive description, a final reading of the data was done to locate appropriate quotes to support participants narratives, meanings, and significant statements. The purpose of this process was to piece together four main objectives from the interviews: (a) the public's understanding of police use of force policies, (b) the public's perception of police-citizen deadly force encounters, (c) media and social media influences on public perceptions about policing policies or police use of deadly force, and (d) how media and social media impact participant's knowledge and perceptions about policing policy and police use of deadly force.

All participants in this study were located using a random purposeful sampling method based on a specific criterion using a recruitment questionnaire to determine if individual fit criteria for the study, and if they would be willing to participate in a study for academic purposes. Prior to the selection of the participant pool, some adjustments to the population needed to be changed to account for linguistics deficiencies on the part of the researcher. The researcher only speaks and understands English. This was a necessary change for credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of this study. These changes will be explained further in this chapter.

Prior to conducting interviews, participants were thanked for their willing participation. After interviews were completed participants were thanked again and the researcher transcribed all interview data. Each participant received their transcription through private email, and they were able to review and determine if the researcher captured accurate, valid, and complete representations of their narratives. There were two participants that returned their transcription with some minor grammatical errors, and the researcher applied those edits noted. This cross checking of data was to help ensure the reliability, dependability, and the transferability of data.

A qualitative software program, AQUAD Seven, to analyze data collected from participants was utilized in addition to using descriptive phenomenological process to inquiry (Colaizzi, 1978), to enhance the dependability and confirmability of this study. The qualitative software assisted with organizing the data and formulating any themes that might have been missed in the hand calculation of data. The qualitative software, AQUAD Seven, did not find any additional themes that had not be already identified

when performing coding of the data by hand using the descriptive phenomenological process to inquiry (Colaizzi, 1978). This process assisted in the confirmability and consistency of any present themes and coded data.

In examining the lived experiences of the public and understanding their knowledge and perceptions about policing policy pertaining to police use of deadly force and whether media, social media, or community leaders influenced those perceptions, there were twelve specific themes that had emerged. Themes related to RQ1 were *life or death, excessive force, good intentions, undecided*. The themes related to RQ2 were *communing with likeminded people, authenticity/legitimacy, conceptual knowledge, friends/family, social media/mass media/community leaders*. For RQ3 the themes were: *police accountability, police training, public education/community safety*. These themes are described and listed in further detail in this chapter in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Setting

Participants in this study were recruited through a recruitment questionnaire with closed question responses. The recruitment of participants was performed at a public park in Palm Beach County, Florida where the researcher approached people individually to ensure a sense of confidentiality, and comfort. All individuals were thanked for their willingness to fill out the questionnaire. Individuals that filled out the questionnaire were then selected at random based on the criterion for this study.

The researcher contacted people that were individually selected for participation via telephone and invited them to participate in private face-to-face interviews at the public library. Prior to conducting the individual in-depth interviews, the researcher

thanked the participants for their time and willing participation. The research set up

individual interviews to be held at the public library for each of the 25 prospective

participants. During the telephone conversations with prospective participants, and prior

to scheduling interview times and dates, all individuals were given a brief introduction of

the issues that would be discussed and explored during the interview process.

After scheduling interviews, and throughout the process of conducting interviews,

there were three participants which had some scheduling issues, due to either work or

family. Those participants were willing to reschedule the interviews with the researcher

at a more convenient time for their participation due to their individual circumstances,

and the researcher tried to be as accommodating as possible to each participant that

expressed scheduling concerns.

During scheduled interviews, and prior to conducing the initial interviews,

participants were informed by the researcher that they would be recorded during the

interview, would get a copy of the transcription after their interview were complete for

their review, and informed that they could withdraw their participation from the study at

any time for any reason. Participants were very forthcoming in their responses to

interview questions and appeared to be comfortable within the private environment of the

conference room in the public library.

Demographics

There were 19 people who participated in this study. Participants were residents

of Palm Beach County, Florida. Fourteen had resided in the county for more than 15

years, four had lived in the county for 10 years, and one lived in the county for at least 5

years prior to the commencement of this study. The median range for residency in Palm Beach County for participants was 10 years. The participants ranged in age from 25 to 55 years with the median age being approximately 45 years old. The gender of participants were eleven females and eight males. The ethnicities of individuals were: fourteen Caucasian, four African American, and one Hispanic. Three of the participants reported their religious preference as Catholic, six were Christian, and then ten participants stated their preference as other.

The participants seemed to be diverse in their educational backgrounds. All participants appeared to have some type of educational background that ranged from a high school graduate to a PhD. One participant had a PhD, and another a Juris Doctorate degree. Five participants had bachelor's degree and four had an associate degree. There also were three participants with some college from a technical, vocational, or trade school, and five participants had obtained a high school diploma or GED.

Seventeen participants had no family or friends that were associated with law enforcement, but there were two participants who had a friend who did associate with a law enforcement officer, however the participant themselves were not friends with the officers themselves. Fourteen of participants have had some type of minor contact with police through receiving tickets for minor infractions. There were five participants who have never received any type of infraction from an officer and all participants claimed that they had no prior felonies or misdemeanors with law enforcement.

The population for this study was changed during the recruitment of participants, when the researcher noticed that there would be an obvious language barrier when it

came to individuals who spoke Spanish, Creole, Portuguese, and other international languages. The make-up of the population was changed to English speaking individuals for the credibility, reliability, determinability, and validity of this study.

Data Collection

The goal of this study was to interview 25 participants. However, prior to interviewing the initial 25 participants, saturation was reached after just 19 interviews with participants. The 19 interviews were conducted through single interviews with participants at the local public library. Therefore, the population for this study was changed from 25 participants to 19 participants.

The selection for participants were made immediately after IRB approval (05-20-19-0139815) in May of 2019. The researcher made daily visits to Scott's Place, approaching individuals with a recruitment survey to find potential candidates for this study. Thirty people were interested in taking part in the study, but only 25 met the criterion. Those 25 individuals were then contacted by the researcher through the individual's preferred method of contact stated on their recruitment survey from, via phone or email. The researcher then scheduled appointments with individuals to take place at the local library at times that were both convenient to the participants and the researcher. Upon meeting potential participants at the public library, the researcher gave individuals a consent form that outlined the details of the criteria for the study, an explanation of the study's purpose and approach, and denoted the voluntary nature of the study.

All participants were given the opportunity to read the consent form and ask the researcher any questions, or express any concerns, prior to the interview. All participants were assigned a code by the researcher for anonymity. The remaining individuals that fit the criteria but did not participate due to the study reaching saturation, were contacted by telephone and email and the researcher explained that they would no longer be needed to for the research study and individuals were thanked for their willingness to participate.

The research began interviews with participants on June 20, 2019 and continued through September 30, 2019. All interviews were scheduled for a 4-hour timeframe, but most interviews only lasted for 2 hours. During interviews I asked open ended questions, that allowed the researcher to ask any follow-up questions for further clarity and elaboration as necessary. Audio recording was used during the interview, that was stored on a secure thumb drive and kept in a locked office in the researcher's home. The researcher also took handwritten notes during each interview. After the completion of the interviews, the researcher transcribed each interview and within 24 hours of the interview, sent the transcribed interviews via email to participants for the member checking process. The participants reviewed their transcript and advised the researcher about any elaborations or corrections at that time to ensure the researcher had recorded their lived experience correctly. There were two participants that returned their transcripts with edits on some grammatical corrections, and the researcher applied those edits. All data from the transcripts were saved to a password protected thumb drive in document folders that were categorized by participants assigned numerical code.

There were no unexpected occurrences during the data collection process, all methods described in Chapter 3 for data collections were followed. There were a couple of interviews that were rescheduled by participants, but all participants were very eager to participate in the interview process and express their lived experiences on the phenomenon. Some participants seemed to have greater knowledge than others on police use of force policies, whereas others with limited knowledge had greater suggestions for changes to policing policies. Regardless, all participants were very open with sharing their experiences and opinions.

Findings of the Interviews

When examining the lived experiences of citizen's understanding, knowledge, and perceptions about policing policy pertaining to police-citizen deadly force encounters and whether social media, media, or community leaders influenced those perceptions, there were twelve specific themes that emerged. Themes related to RQ1 were life or death, excessive force, good intentions, and undecided. The themes related to RQ2 were communing with likeminded people, authenticity/legitimacy, conceptual knowledge, friends/family, social media/mass media/community leaders. In RQ3 the themes were: police accountability, police training, public education/community safety. All these themes are described and listed in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Table 1

Study Themes and Descriptions Related to RQ1

Themes	Descriptions
The public's understanding of police use-of-force policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters	

Theme 1: Life or death	Public perceptions about police use of deadly force.
Theme 2: Excessive force	The conceptional knowledge, which often leads to a perceptional outlook of policing policy and police-citizen encounters of deadly force.
Theme 3: Good intentions	A combination of policy-specific, conceptional, and perceptional knowledge about police use of force policies and police-citizen encounters of deadly force.
Theme 4: Undecided	Includes both policy-specific knowledge and media influenced scenarios the public has about police use of force policy and officer's behavior and actions towards the public.

The Public's Understanding of Police Use of Force Policies

and Police-Citizen Deadly Force Encounters

The following themes relating to RQ1 emerged, which examined the lived experiences of the public's understanding about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters: life or death, excessive force, good intentions, and policy-specific knowledge. Participants detailed how these four themes related to their perceptions about police, policing policy, and police-citizen use of deadly force.

Theme 1: Life or Death

Participants interviewed were asked if they had knowledge of their local policing agency's use of force policies, if they had viewed those policies, and to give an estimation of the percentage of citizens also knew about these policies. Only seven out of

the nineteen participants knew their local Sheriff's office had a use of force policy, only one participant had ever viewed those policies, and ten participants out of the nineteen believed that under 10% of the population of Palm Beach County even knew these policies existed.

The participants in this study discussed their knowledge about policing policies pertaining to the use of deadly force and how both positive and negative actions by police officers affected their perceptions about police-citizen deadly force encounters.

Subtheme: Perceptions about police use of deadly force. Participants had various opinions about police-citizen deadly force encounters within Palm Beach County and their perceptions regarding PBSO. Participant 1, 2, 10, 16, and 17 all stated that police use of deadly force should be used in life or death situations, when officers' lives were in danger or if officers were protecting the lives of citizens. Most participants had varied perceptions about what life or death situations implied or included. While some participants took the perception of PBSO having good policies with good police officers, other participants denoted flawed policing policies with bad officers or a combination thereof.

Although participants had strong opinions about policing policy and police-citizens encounters of deadly force, most of them had little to no policy-specific knowledge about Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office's (PBSO) use of force policy. Participants main knowledge about policing policy and police-citizen contacts involving deadly force primarily came from news media, social media, or some type of internet source.

Participant 1 had acknowledged that she had never viewed a police use-of-force policy, did not know who oversaw the development of these policies, and did not know that PBSO had such a policy. She said:

I understand that the only time deadly force should be used is if someone is shooting at you or threatening your life but, for something that's not life threatening it shouldn't be used at all.

Many participants either did not know PBSO had use of force policies, had never viewed these polices, or didn't know who established these polices, they all were very vocal about their perceptions about police. Participant 2 said:

Deadly force should only be sued if the officer's life is clearly in jeopardy. If there is a clear and present danger to the officer's life, then yes, deadly force I agree with 100%, but I don't agree with it in any other context. As far as who establishes these policies, I would imagine there is an internal review board. I'm sure that the FBI, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), all have a generic set of guidelines and then each is tailored to the individual County's.

Participant 16 had a similar perspective about police use of deadly force. Although she did know about PBSO's use-of-force policy, she denoted that she had never viewed them. She said:

I'm assuming the attorney for PBSO, the local Sheriff, and maybe even an opinion from a law firm establishes these policies. I would assume that it would be the same type of way we establish policy at the clerk's office. However, I think that if a police officer's life is in jeopardy, it's absolutely necessary. So, if it's in

self-defense and they're fully trained and must have to use deadly force, it's

needed.

Participant 10 did not know that PBSO had a use-of-force policy and was unsure whether

those policies were only for Palm Beach County or if all police departments had them.

She was also unsure about who established those policies and had never viewed them.

Participant 10 said:

There is so many times that unarmed people have been shot. So, how do you

explain that?! So, if we had a rule where no one could use fire unless their life

was in danger or they had proof that their life was in danger by someone holding a

gun on them or shooting at them; that would be the only time I would be

comfortable with that one. I can't say for sure who would establish the policies,

but I would think it would have to be the chief.

Participant 17 explained that he did know that PBSO, as well as other policing agencies

across that US had an established use-of-force policies that were devised by state law

makers but has never viewed the policies himself. Participant 17 said:

I don't think deadly force is a nice thing but, there are a lot of people that would

still be alive today if they would've just said no sir, yes sir. If they have to defend

themselves fine, but I think they're going to hide behind it and say oh I (the

officer) can kill you if I (the officer) want to.

Theme 2: Excessive Force

Conceptual knowledge, the knowledge that is gained through concepts, theories,

and principals are learned through viewing, listening, experiencing, or thoughtful

reflective mental activity and often leads to a perceptional view. These Participants

including 3, 7, 9, 12, 14 and 18, all relayed knowledge about policing policy and police-

citizen encounters of deadly force that was conceptualized. Participants 3, 7, 9, 14 and 18

were unaware that PBSO had policing polices relating to use of force, and because of

their lack of knowledge about these policies had never asked to view them.

> **Subtheme: Conceptional perceptions of use of deadly force.** Participants had

different opinions about who exactly established those policies but remained very vocal

about the aggressive actions and behaviors officers have when dealing with citizens.

Participant 3 explained:

> I think use of force is horrible. While there are good people and good officers,
>
> there are bad ones too, and I don't think they would perceive themselves as using
>
> deadly force is a problem and that bothers me. But I do think it's our elected
>
> officials and the Sheriff of Palm Beach County establishes these policies.

Participant 7 said:

> When I have seen police stopping people, it has been a little excessive. They
>
> could have been a little bit more open minded, instead of just trying to jump the
>
> gun. I would say that human resources and internal affairs establish these policies.

Participant 9 and 18 said that they did not know that PBSO had a use of force policy and

did not know who established those policies for agencies. Both participants described

police use of force to be a bad thing. Participant 18 only stated that it was not a good

thing, but Participant 9 said:

> I feel like it happens more so because we can view it on the internet. I feel like
> that's really what happens, I feel like it's been happening consistently for a
> number of years, like police brutality in general or use of force.

The viewpoint of Participant 12 seemed to differ from the others, even though she still considered use of force to be bad, was aware of PBSO's use of force policy even though they had never viewed the policies before. Participant 12 stated:

> I think that use of deadly force is pretty prominent, but you don't see it much on
> social media, however, it's still going on. When I was younger, my family's
> house was raided a couple of times by police. I have seen police being ignorant
> and using abuse of power, slamming people, and have seen my brother kicked in
> the head by police. I can say that I have no idea who establishes those policing
> policies, but it should be the public.

There were many varied perceptions about police use of force that seemed to lack policy-specific knowledge and were based more on either personal experiences, media, or social media influences, or just opinion based. Participant 14 had no knowledge of PBSO's policies, had never viewed them, and did not know who established policing policies. Instead of giving his opinion about police use of force as others did, Participant 14 said:

> My sense from all which I read and gleam, is I hear more complaints about excess
> than I hear about inadequacy. In other words, I don't hear complaints about a lack
> of a strong enough police response like I heard about in places like Baltimore and
> Portland. Where they reportedly lay back and let the mayhem go until one of their
> shoes get scuffed and then it's heck to pay.

Theme 3: Good Intentions

Participants 4, 5, 11, 13, and 15 all provided a combination of some policy-specific, conceptual, and perceptional knowledge about police use of force policies and police-citizen encounters of deadly force. no knowledge about PBSO's use of force policy, or that they even had such a policy.

Subtheme: Policing policy from a perceptional perspective. Most of these participants were aware that PBSO had a use of force policy but explained that they never viewed the policy because they never had a reason to. Two of these participants were not aware of PBSO's use of force policy and didn't know who established those policies. Participant 4 explained:

> I really haven't observed any police use of deadly force. I just like the way they patrol my neighborhood; I love that. I really think the sheriff's department is doing a good job, I really do. I am not sure how does their policies, if I had to guess I would say that the local Sheriff does.

Participant 5 said:

> If the police have somebody that pulls a gun on them, absolutely positively, or something that looks like a gun I think they have every right to shoot first. But as far as who establishes those policies, I could only guess by saying its cops and lawyers and not the public.

Participant 11 said:

I don't believe that it is a bad or prominent as it is in, other cities when you see it

happening on the news and such. PBSO's use of force policies are established just

like any other department, I assume, through legislation and statutes.

Although participants 4, 5, 11, 13, and 15 had varied perceptions about use of deadly

force, they all talked about it being a positive policing tool, good policing, or necessary.

Participant 13 said:

Deadly force is necessary sometimes and I don't' feel that there has been forms of

deadly force that weren't necessary.

Participant 15 said:

It depends on the circumstances. I don't think that people are just arbitrarily killed

by the police. I would be shocked if someone could show me a circumstance

where somebody was minding their own business and was just arbitrarily killed

by a police officer. The use of force policies is generally established by the

agencies internal legal team, but I am not sure if that is the case for PBSO.

Theme 4: Undecided

Participants, 6, 8, and 19 were undecided about police use of deadly force. Some

of the participants discussed how they were against it but, would have an explanation that

supported police use of force. Some Participant's had explanations about media-based

influences as well.

Subtheme: Police use of force and perceived officer behaviors. Both

Participants 6 and 8 did not know that PBSO had a use of force policy, had never

attempted to view those policies, and did not know who oversaw establishing those

policies. Participant 6 said:

I think that police officers should protect themselves if they feel like they have to,

I don't see a problem with that at all They know better than I do; I don't have

enough information to decide.

Participant 8 said:

We live right down the road from a place where a really public case happened, so

for me, I know that it is on my mind. I can't speak to whether statistically that's

something that happens a lot though, so it's kind of a neutral thing for me. It

makes me worried in a way, because you hear about police brutality against black

people a lot and my fiancé is black. So, obviously if he gets pulled over, I wonder

what would happen. I interact with police officers all the time in my work

capacity and they most are really cool people, so your like is this really someone

that's going to shoot my loved one? I don't know if that's something that I can

really believe 100%, so it's a convoluted thing for me.

Participant 19 was a unique interview because he had lots to say about use of deadly

force through generalizing statistics. This participant did know that PBSO had a use of

force policy, he had viewed an older version of PBSO's force policy and denoted that

internal affairs and a higher government agency vetted PBSO's force policy. Participant

19 said:

I think that at least when it comes to inappropriate force, there are three main

sources of that which include lack of training, lack of education, and spousal

abuse. There was a study I think I read about officer's with degrees are 96% less

likely to have complaints against them, so there is something about receiving

more training. They have a 60% rate of spousal abuse and its' because we're

telling them they're in a war every day and it gets in there head, and most of the

officers who are friendly and normal are those who are like I understand I'm

living the same life I was before with an added element.

After participants viewed videos presented by the researcher, participants responses to the

questions posed did not change. All participants were confident with their original

answers with no changes to the second series of questioning.

Table 2

Study Themes and Descriptions Related to RQ2

Themes	Descriptions
Influences contributing to public perceptions and knowledge about policing policy and police-citizen deadly force incidents	
Theme 5: Communing with likeminded people	An explanation of communal interpretation and/or perception, discussing topics with people that think alike.
Theme 6: Authenticity/legitimacy	The extent to which one is authentic and accepts responsibility in the ability to conform to the laws or rules.
Theme 7: Conceptual knowledge	An explanation of how people relate to, or base ideals about policing policy on mental concepts.
Theme 8: Friends/family	Articulating influences that long-time friends and family have on individuals.

Theme 9: Social media/Mass Media/Community leaders	An explanation of the knowledge gained through the internet, and interpretations of the truth from social media about police use of deadly force.

Influences Contributing to Public Perceptions about Policing Policy

and Police-Citizen Encounters of Deadly Force

There are several factors that contribute to citizen's perceptions about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters. Some of those factors are perceptional or conceptual knowledge, but often does not include actual policy-specific knowledge in those opinions. Participants explained that most of their knowledge about use of deadly force and policing policies came from the internet, social media sites, news media, or family and like-minded friends. All participants did say that they have discussed policing issues with family or friends, but that their opinions were likely not changed from any small debates because mostly they were all like-minded people.

Theme 5: Communing with Likeminded People

Participants 4, 7, 10, 12, 16, 17, and 19, have had personal experiences with presumptive excess force whether it happened to them or to someone else they knew. These events have shaped and changed the ways in which they view and discuss use of force with individuals. Excluding Participant 16, all these participants stated that they were straight forward with certainty in their opinions about use of force and generally only discussed these topics with like-minded individuals. Participant 16 said:

Although most of the individuals I discuss these things with have common

opinions, sometimes my opinion is changed depending on the person I am talking

to, or the source they may have gotten their information from.

Participant 4 had seen presumptive excessive force on another individual but explained

that due to the uncooperating individual that those policing action might have been

necessary. Participant 4 said:

I talk to my boy about respecting the police and teach them the rules and what to

do if a police officer approaches them, if they're driving. You know, my sons'

listen to their mom because unfortunately you just never know, if there might be

bad cops out there.

Participant 7 has had some minor contact with police but explained that because of the

color of his skin, he was often approached by police with caution and then escalation,

even when he cooperated. Participant 7 said:

I really try not to discuss these issues unless they involve people that I know or

love. But when I discuss these matters it is generally with people that have the

same kind of mind set that I do.

When it came to personals experiences with negative police interactions, Participant 17

said:

I have had officers yank and pull me around when I was no danger to them,

throwing me up against a car and swearing at me when I was standing them just

waiting for them to put handcuffs on me. I mean, I do discuss these things with

friends, but it doesn't change my perceptions about police because we both come in with the same mind set.

Participant 19 discussed how he was dragged out of his sister's car by police, he was late picking up his sister for work and had borrowed her car. He said:

The police saw this dude freaking out at 8am and probably assumed I was on meth or something and so they slammed me down on Southern Boulevard. I was obviously not to fond of the response. But when I talk about police, and police incidents with individuals I know, we all pretty much think alike. We all see that there are discrepancies in cases like the Philando Castile case, and others I can't think of right now, you need to think about analyzing the tactical minutia. I, personally, have stopped keeping my wallet in my back pocket because of all the police shootings.

Participant 12 explained that talking with others really doesn't change her opinion about police use of force or deadly force because individuals that she discusses these issues with have like-minded opinions. Participant 12 said:

I have seen police use of force and it pissed me off. It kind of makes you look at police as the bad guys, not so much as the good guys, and think that they are abusing what powers they do have.

Participant 10 also denoted that their opinion is very much unchanged in these types of discussions. The participant claimed that police has used presumptive abuse of power with her within Palm Beach County. Participant 10 said:

> I asked myself if I was white and in a different neighborhood would that have
>
> happened.

There were similar accounts of presumptive excessive police use of force from

Participants 2, 11, and 15, but the perceptions of those accounts, although consider

abusive in power, seemed to favor those police actions. Participant 2 explained:

> I have seen use of force, and I should give kudos to the officer for not pulling his
>
> gun and shooting first and asking questions after the fact. I'd say that probably
>
> half the blame belongs to the subject and he may have incurred the officer's wrath
>
> so to speak. When I do speak to individuals about the use of deadly force, we
>
> generally take the same position as to the events that occurred.

Most participants would claim that communications with other individuals about events

like deadly force or other controversial issues were generally discussed with people that

had the same general thoughts as themselves, that were like minded or of the same mind

set. Participant 15 had stated:

> I have seen use of force by police in Palm Beach County, but it was a use of force
>
> that was appropriate. In fact, I almost jumped in to help. Other's opinions or
>
> viewpoints do not influence me, because most people these days are unable to
>
> engage in civil educated discussion.

Participant 11 witness an unusual situation with police, but still had some mistrust

because of the circumstances. Participant 11 stated:

> After an incident with my stepson, when he blew up his hand, the police refused
>
> to act even though he was lying there bleeding, until they assessed the situation

because it was bomb related. The police said they weren't going to arrest him, but

six months later they arrested him, so after that I didn't trust the police.

Other participants, such as Participants 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 13, 14, and 18 had not witnessed any

police use of force or deadly force within Palm Beach County. These participants had not

had any personal afflictions by police use of force or deadly force actions, and they all

stated that they too conversed with individuals that were like-minded and that their

opinions were often times not changed, during those conversations.

Theme 6: Authenticity/Legitimacy

The researcher posed the question regarding public leaders and whether they

helped people feel safe within their communities. There were approximately 12

participants out of the 19 interviewed who stated that public leaders did not tell the truth

when addressing the public and these participants stated that there was no sense of

legitimacy on the part of the policing agency when those public statements occurred,

specifically from the local Sheriff of Palm Beach County. Participants 18 and 1 stated

that often, public leaders don't have all the facts prior to public announcements about a

use of force incident. Participants 15 and 17 had a similar viewpoint. Participant 17

stated:

When public announcements occur live, they are basically getting information

themselves in real time which means stuff could be wrong and people are forming

opinions right away, so by the time they come out with a retraction it's too late.

Because then people just think they were lying to being with.

Participant 15 said:

I do think that PBSO does a good job of being transparent, because I don't think

that the Sheriff wants renegade deputies or bad people wearing his star.

Participant's 3, 8, and 9 similarly stated that they didn't think that the public really got all

the facts when the Sheriff was quick to make public appearances on active scenes of

police use of deadly force incidents. Participant 8 remarked that

For a person in leadership, they can't say what they are actually thinking to the

public. The only thing they can do is attempt to make you feel like it's okay.

Participant 9 said:

Public statements on police use of deadly force by public leaders were merely

scripted, and not necessarily the truth.

Although many participants stated that their minds were not changed by conversing with

like-minded individuals, Participant 3 asserted how being judged for asserting her own

opinions may be possible. Participant 3 stated:

I certainly wouldn't want somebody else to have all the facts in my situation

before they judged me. The only thing they can do is attempt to make you feel

like it's okay.

Participants 2, 6, 10, 12 and 19 also explained that when public leaders made public

announcement from active police use of force or deadly force incidents, public leaders

were neither authentic nor legitimate in their speeches. Due to this, they too stated that

they formed their own opinions about issues and usually could not be swayed from those

opinions.

Seven of the 19 participants had a different viewpoint than the 12 participants concerning the authenticity and legitimacy of community leaders that publicly addressed the community about police use of force and deadly force incidents. Participants 4, 5, 7, 11, 14, and 16 explained a very understanding of how community leaders were both transparent, authentic, and provided a legitimate calm when providing information to the public on use of deadly force incidents.

Participants 4, 5, 7, 13 and 14 stated that they trusted what community leaders said and did feel a sense of legitimacy when listening to their public statements. Participant 11 said:

> Compared to what you get from new media reporters, I think it makes a difference when the sheriff shows up and talks on the news about what happened. I think you get more information from the sheriff verses the news reporter, because he can say more about the situation than the reporter can.

Participant 16 said:

> They work it, they live it, they know and have the resources to read back on their policies. They know their policies better than anybody else. They are our experts; those are the people we want to hear from.

Theme 7: Conceptual Knowledge

The researcher in this study learned that people build their ideals and base their opinion based on visual information as well as a consensus of an agreed common knowledge on an issue or occurrence. Conceptual knowledge is the overall forefront for human perceptions about police use of force and deadly force incidents. Among the

nineteen participants, six of the participants had mixed perceptions about policing policy and the current negative perceptions about police in the United States.

Participants 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 15, 17 all were undecided about whether police were perceived negatively and if the accounts that media reported about police during deadly force incidents were clear and concise. Participants 1, 4 and 5 were all undecided about whether police were perceived in a negative manner and explained that, media reports that were live from a freshly unfolding use of deadly force incident were confusing at best. Participant 6 said:

> I don't think the sheriff should be on scene until he has full information about the incident.

Participant 7 had their own take on public perceptions and explained:

> Police are perceived both positively and negatively by groups of people. Some people would feel that they could have avoided deadly force, while others would agree that that degree of force may have been necessary. But I think media confuses at lot of people because after interviewing everyone on scene they kind of fill in the gaps, which causes people to wonder if there is something missing or wrong in their reporting of the incident.

Participant 15 said:

> I think there is a certain segment of society that is always going to say that the cop was right, and there is a certain segment of society that is always going to say the cop was wrong. I think that media is horribly bias.

Participant 17 said:

The way the police are viewed depends upon the race of the victim. But I do

believe that the media almost always gives misinformation on deadly force

incidents.

The remaining 13 participants stated that police were perceived negatively by the public,

the media, and sometimes by their own agency or public leaders. Participant's 2, 8, 9, 10,

11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18 and 19 all had similar perspectives about police being viewed

negatively after a use of deadly force incident stating how media was the main cause of

this problem. Participant 2 explained:

Law enforcement agencies within Palm Beach County are not 100% truthful, and

I have seen where media muttles the facts and you wonder who's right and who's

wrong but then usually within a day or two you find out what's really going on.

Similarly, Participant 19 stated:

I think that what is important for people to try to remember is what happens on

the news is news. A police officer, in a good shoot out where there's proper use of

deadly force is usually not considered newsworthy. But I absolutely think that the

bias of the individual media source is, not only a big factor, but I think it's the

main factor.

Participants 16 and 14 mentioned that the media is generally looking for new worthy

stories to capture audiences and that deadly force is obviously makes for a good story,

especially when it's race related. These participants also noted that the media takes

everything out of context and often rushes to get a story out to the public without having

all the facts. Participants 8, 9, 11, 13 and 18 denoted that the media often paints the police

in a negative light and that media generally had their own agenda or scripted material to report.

Other participants discussed race as an element for why media capture a story about police use of deadly force and the media's bias in covering a story. Participant 10 explained:

It would depend on if police are viewed negatively, it would depend on what neighborhood you're living in and who you are. If it affects the black community, then yes.

Participant 3 said:

I do think officers are perceived negatively, because a lot of people have fears and lots of different groups of people, like your minority groups, are very afraid because they feel they are going be targeted due to the color of their skin.

Participant 12 said:

Most of the times police use deadly force over things that originally wouldn't have required deadly force to begin with and I do think it has a lot to do with race and race related stereotypes. The media just adds to all the confusion with these incidents.

Theme 8: Friends/Family

Participants explain where they get their knowledge from when it comes to policing policy and police use of deadly force incidents. The researcher listened to participants narratives while they articulated what influenced their perceptions and how

sharing information with friends and family changed, or didn't change, their perceptions

when it came to policing policy or police-citizen encounters of force.

Participants 1 and 2 denoted that they most prevalently talked about policing

policy with family and got their knowledge about police-citizen encounters of force from

mass media. They both also stated that family discussion very rarely changes their

opinions or perceptions about those use of deadly force incidents discussed. Participant 2

said:

> I do believe that news and social media is truthful, but do not think they are
>
> reliable sources of information because they pick and choose what they report to
>
> the public. That is why I watch all major news networks, i.e. NBC, ABC, and
>
> CBS and then piece all the information together to get everything.

Participants 4 and 13 explained that they spoke with family about policing policies and

got their knowledge of police-citizen force encounters from social media. Both

participant's 4 and 13 were parents of older children, who discussed proactive resolutions

with their families about what to do when pulled over by the police, respect of police

officers, and other means of how to conduct yourself with authority. Participant 4 and 13

did denote that they received most of their information about deadly force incidents from

social media websites and they believed these websites to be truthful and reliable in the

information that they were receiving.

Participants 3 and 18 denoted that they spoke mostly with family about policing

policy and got their knowledge about police-citizen use of deadly force information from

both the mass media and social media. Participant 3 and 18 also explained that those

discussions with family did not influence a change in their perceptions or opinions about what they thought about deadly force incidents. Both participants also stated that although they received their knowledge about police-citizen encounters of force from mass media and social media, they didn't believe that these sources were neither reliable nor truthful.

Participants 8, 9, 12, 17, and 19 discussed how they mostly talked about policing policy with both family and friends. Denoting the knowledge, they gained about police-citizen encounters of force were generally from social media. Participants 8 and 9 explained that they discussed policing policies and police-citizen use of force with both friends and family. Both participants stated that their opinion is not altered from their own perspectives when discussing this topic. They also stated that most of the knowledge that they gained about police-citizen encounters of force came from internet or social media sources. Participant 8 and 9 both stated, although they received much of their information through these sources, they had believed them to be unreliable and untruthful.

Participants 12, 17, and 19 all reported discussing policing incidents with family, but mostly with friends, with social media being their primary source of knowledge about police-citizen encounters of force. The participants all stated that their opinions on policing matter were steadfast and were not influenced by friends, family, media, or social media influences. Even so, the participants claimed that they did not find media or social sources to be truthful or reliable in their information. Participant 19 explained:

Generally, when I talk about this topic with my friends, I have friends that are across the political spectrum, and I typically approach the situation not as one of the ethical ones, but one of the tactical. When I initially hear about police-citizen encounters of force it's on Facebook or a friend has told me about it, so then I google it. But if I can't find enough information or hasn't been released to the public, there is all sorts of things you can find on the dark web.

Participant 12 said:

I hear some things on the news channels, but most of what happens, you see the public responding to on social media or people that you know. I would like to believe some of the things that are on the news, but it just that, actions are louder than words and the things media are doing makes it hard for us to believe what they are telling us.

Participant 17 stated that he had some trust in mass media, naming NBC, ABC, and CBS. But mentioned that he failed to trust anything that came about under the Black Lives Matter movement.

Participants 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, and 16 explained how they generally spoke with friends about policing policy. Most participants obtained knowledge about police-citizen force encounters from mass media and occasional social media postings. Participant 16 obtained their knowledge about police-citizen force encounters from an uncommon source. Participant 16 explained:

I always discuss with friends; it always comes up with every story we read and sometimes my opinion is changed. It depends on the person that I am talking to

because they may have a different source of where they got their information. Most of my knowledge about police-citizen use of force encounters comes from public records. So, it's straight from the citation, or incident report, or the record. But I don't believe they are always truthful either, I believe that when police officers write their reports it's very one-sided.

Participant 7 said that he received much of his information about police-citizen encounters of force from social media and mass media and thought that those sources were mostly reliable and truthful. Participant 7 said:

I really try not to discuss it because if it doesn't really involve me or someone close to me, it's not concerning to me. So, for the most part, I do think social media and the news is fairly pretty reliable as to the facts.

Participants 6 and 11 also expressed that they were very opinionated and rarely swayed by friends from their perceptions of police-citizen encounters of force. Participant 11 obtain most of her knowledge from social media and mass media programming and considered those sources to be unreliable and not always truthful. Participant 6 obtain knowledge about police use of force and policing policy from the internet and mass media and denoted that she considered those sources to be reliable and truthful.

Participant's 15 and 5 stated that they discussed police use of force and deadly force with friends and Participant 15 stated that others would not influence his opinion relating to those incidents. These participants obtained their primary knowledge about policing policies and police-citizen force incidents from mass media and claimed that mass media was unreliable and bias, especially in Palm Beach County, Florida.

Participant 5 was not influenced by friends but stated that mass media did have an impact on is opinion. Participant 5 said:

> Government is mind control. Government and the media are one in the same to me, so I don't believe any of it. But it still influences me, there's no question, but I don't stand by it.

Participant 10 and 14 stated that they gained their knowledge about policing policies and police-citizen force encounters through social media and mass media. Participant 10 denoted that her opinion was not changed or influenced by friends or media, that she was steadfast in her own perceptions and ideals about police. But explained that when she saw live feeds on social media about police-citizen force encounters, especially deadly force, she did believe those videos to be reliable and truthful. Participant 14 explained that they did have some opinion changes when talking to friends about policing issues and stated that often they believed social media and mass media to be truthful and reliable on those issues. Participant 14 stated:

> Videos I have seen on YouTube have changed my perception and caused me to believe various police-citizen issues exist. I have had no personal experience with negative policing issues and maybe it's my white privilege. I hate that concept, but you know I do think there is some truth to it. But, more often than not, I believe social media and the news to be truthful.

Theme 9: Social Media/Mass Media/Community Leaders

Participants explain their interpretations, theories, and opinions about social media, mass media, and community leaders. Most participants' narratives represent the

truthful and reliable information, or not, as the receiver of those public outlet sources of reporting police-citizen force encounters.

Participants 4, 5, 7, 11, 14, and 16, voiced common opinions about social media and mass media influences on public perceptions. Participant 4 mentioned, social media was out of control and that sometimes the mass media likes to repeat high profile situations to incite a public reaction. Participant 5, 7, and 11 denoted, it would be useful if mass media slowed down the live broadcasts and related information after relevant facts could be properly investigated, prior to releasing to the public, to reduce confusing media reports about police use of force incidents. Participants 14 and 16 made similar statements about mass media and specifically reports, adding that mass media is performs sloppy work when trying to rush out stories and often depict events out of context, when reporting police use of force incidents.

Participants 4, 5, 7, 11, 14, and 16, also denoted that community leaders gave them a sense of legitimacy and safety when it came to public announcements concerning issues of police-citizen deadly force incidents. Participants 4, 5, and 7 denoted, they salute the Sheriff for being attentive to police-citizen use of force matters by being on site when these incidents do occur. Participant 11 stated:

> I feel like there's more information from the Sheriff verses what the news
> reporters are allowed to give on police use of deadly force incidents.

Participant 14 said:

> It could influence me when I hear the Sheriff speak about these incidents because
> it gives you a chance to evaluate the veracity, the truthfulness of how things are,

what things you believe, the things that you are learning, and whether they are

important.

Upon initial responses, and after participants viewed videos presented by the researcher, participants responses to the initial questions did not change. The video materials, although present and fresh in their mind, did not appear to have any influence on the participant's original point of view. All participants were confident with their original answers with no changes to the second series of questioning.

Participants 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, and 19 had mixed perceptions of mass media, social media, and community leaders when it came to reports about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters. Interpretations of how mass media, social media, and community leaders influenced individuals' perceptions were described with a focus and emphasis on the local sheriff's department and the sheriff. Participant 2 explained:

I like Rick Bradshaw, he is a good Sheriff, but personally he just sticks his nose in the high-profile incident's and he's just not consistent. Hearing him speak or seeing him on scene at these deadly force incident's does not provide me any sense of greater security or safety in my community.

Participants 1and 6 stated that seeing the local Sheriff on scene at a newly unfolding incidents of police-citizen use of deadly force was not reassuring or comforting to citizens safety. Participant 1 and 6 denoted, they would like to see the local Sheriff have more details of the situation prior to appearing before the media. Participant 3 stated that when the local Sheriff was on the scene of a police-citizen deadly force incident and gave

brief statements, those statements were only one-sided and were not representative of transparency or full disclosure.

Both participant 8 and 9 stated, media has a specific agenda and mass media merely released information to the public according to their own news media outlet and reporter's opinions. They also denoted that media did tend to have some type of influence on their perspectives about police-citizen use of force actions, but those influences were mostly negative perspectives about police. Participant 10 explained:

Media and social media can be both confusing and helpful, but it doesn't really change my perceptions about police-citizen use of force incidents in general and it doesn't make me feel any safer in my community.

Participant 15 said:

Media is horribly bias and although I think it's great that the sheriff gets on the news, I still think he's full of crap. However, I do think that PBSO does a good job of being transparent.

Participant 13, 17 and 18, denoted that social media and mass media provided more confusion to the facts and truth of police-citizen deadly force encounters. Other statements included were that media, social media, nor the local Sheriff or community leaders made them have any sense of community safety or security by their public appearances on police use of deadly force incidents. Participant 12 and 19 also stated that social media and mass media provided a lot of bias and how it was difficult to sort out fact from fiction with the reports of police-citizen deadly force encounters.

Upon initial responses, and after participants viewed videos presented by the researcher, participants responses to the initial questions did not change. The video materials, although present and fresh in their mind, did not appear to have any influence on the participant's original point of view. All participants were confident with their original answers with no changes to the second series of questioning.

Table 3

Study themes and descriptions related to RQ3

Themes	Descriptions
Impact of media, social media, and community leaders on public perceptions of use of force policies, post incident	
Theme 10: Police accountability	The extent to which officers and their agency's accept responsibility for their perceived wrongful actions or behaviors.
Theme 11: Police training	Refers to the extent to which officers are mentally and physically prepared to function in an authoritative policing role.
Theme 12: Public education/community safety	The extent in which policing agencies can better serve their communities with public trust.

Influential Impacts of Media, Social Media, and Community Leaders on

Public Perceptions of Use of Force Policies, Post Incident

There was much discussion from participants regarding the extent to which officers and their agencies accept responsibility for publicly perceived wrongful actions. Participants had varied opinions and perceptions about police transparency and

accountability. Some participants discussed policing policy options and signified that police training should be a priority for policing agencies. While other participants denoted that public education, policing education, and public safety should be a higher priority to agencies. There were a few participants that thought that policing policies as the stood were effective and efficient.

Theme 10: Police Accountability

Participants 3, 4, 5, 6, 13, 16, and 17, all had similar narratives when they discussed police accountability. Participant 3 explained that it has gotten better, but there is still a way to go. Participant 4, 6, and 16 denoted confidence in our local Sheriff's offices investigative methods. Participant 5 said:

I think they are held accountable. It seems like there is a lot of accountability there, especially with all the use of video now.

Participant 13 said:

Yes, I am confident in their investigative methods because I myself am out to find the truth and I believe that it's their job to do that, and that they are good people as well and they would do the same as I would.

Participant 17 stated:

I do think they are held accountable to various degrees of punishment, depending on the offense or how easy it is to sweep under the rug.

There were proportionately more participants who did not think that police were held accountable for their actions and stated that police often got away with any significant punishment for those wrong doings. Participants 2, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18, and 19

stated concerns about the transparency of policing agencies and whether police officers of agencies were begin held accountable for their wrong actions within the public purview. Participant 2, 8, 15, and 19 denoted that police departments should not be conducting their own investigations into officer misconduct and that outside agencies or a public committee should be allowed to investigate and assess punishments for those officers. Participant 7 explained:

> Because there are some incidents where the deputies were not exactly held accountable for their actions and the community saw that, the community was upset. So, I don't think that they are held accountable for their actions, but I do believe the communities try to make officers accountable for the stuff they do. So, personally I wouldn't be very confident in their investigations.

Participants 10, 11, 12, and 18 stated in their narratives that officers were not held accountable mainly because they were police officers and they could get away with it. These participants discussed that they did not have any confidence in the protocols, procedures, and investigations of PBSO. Participant 14 explained:

> I don't know enough to know if police use of force investigations are sufficient, but I lean toward the assumption that it's insufficient.

Participants 1 and 9 were undecided about whether officers were held accountable and if PBSO's investigations were efficient during police use of force. Participant 9 said that depending on the situation police could or could not be held accountable. On the other hand, Participant 1 explained:

> I don't honestly know too much about what they do, what their procedures are. So
>
> unfortunately, I can't really respond to that because I haven't been informed on
>
> what they do.

Theme 11: Police Training

In their narratives, many participants discussed the training of police officers

pertaining to the extent to which officers are both physically and mentally prepared for

their duties. Some participants denoted that training in areas such as education and safety

were necessary, while other participants indicated that police agencies lack in training

officers in sufficient policy which included procedural training. There were a small

number of participants who suggested that PBSO did an adequate job in all aspects of

training and that any changes to training would just benefit the effective work they are

doing.

Participants 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 16, and 18 denoted educational/safety training should be

a priority for officers. Participant 1 suggested that educational public safety information

should be a necessary so that the public always knows what is going on in their

communities. Participant 3 stated:

> I would hope that police training would involve a lot of situational training
>
> exercises, group police discussions with videos, demonstrating how situation
>
> should be or can be handled. But I think more scenario trainings would be good
>
> too for officers and the community.

Participants 3 and 7 discussed how educational community safety programs would be

beneficial to the public. Training officers with remedial courses to allow for more

specific support structures to be in place around communities, so that crime would not be an only option for some people in desperate or dire situations. Participants 16 and 18 were like-minded in their narratives and indicated that policing agencies should learn to create programs for educating the citizens about use of deadly force, allowing citizens to understand what is expected of them during encounters with officers, what to do and what not to do, and also establishing a criteria for the citizens when they do have various types of encounters with officers, for everyone's safety. Participant 9 had an expanded explanation about this issue and stated:

> I would like to see officers starting with children k-12 doing something like educating kids about police starting at a young age and as they grow up keep educating them and letting them know or understand such things like, not to run from the police, why it's bad to run from the police, and other information that would be beneficial to the safety of individuals, and the police.

Participants 2, 10, 11,12,14, 15, and 19 suggested policy or procedural changes might be an effective way to keep the public safe and informed. Participants 2, 10, 15, and 19 indicated that policy changes would be a beneficial way to address concerns over police use of force incidents. These participants were like-mined in their narratives and discussed police using alternative uses of force, aside from deadly force, to include rubber bullets or bean bags instead of guns. Participant 2 suggested:

> There should be a policy change that, once an incident occurs there should be a 96 hours gag order. Because in the first 24 hours you got the media bashing the police for the incident and agencies may say something wrong about the

investigation because they don't quite have all the facts yet. This way, everyone

can get it right the first-time verses rebroadcasting multiple facts as they trickle in.

Participants 4, 5, 6, 13, and 17 indicated that no change was necessary to PBSO's

policing policies. These participants were like-minded in their narrative indicating that

the policies, procedures, and protocols that PBSO were currently using appeared to be

effective, fair, and promoted safety within communities. For example, Participant 13

stated:

> They're doing a good job. I really do think their procedures are up to par. I do
>
> believe that maybe they should give us a better sense of ease that they are
>
> investigating use of force incidents because you know, the media just hypes
>
> everything up.

Theme 12: Public Education/Community Safety

The researcher questioned participants about opinions regarding police use of

force post-incident to understand whether community leaders impacted citizen's

perceptions.

Participants 2 and 5 both explained that there should be a gag order on media for a

time period of 24 to 96 hours so that law enforcement could gather the appropriate facts

after police-citizen use of force incidents, prior to divulging information to the media and

the public. Participants 3, 7, 9, 15 and 18 stated that prior to and after incidents involving

force, officers should receive more role play and simulation training to help reduce police

use of force incidents. Participant 17 explained:

I think PBSO does a great job training their officers, but the more real-world

scenarios they are in, the better they can get. You know simulations that they run

deputies through could mean the difference between life or death for a deputy or a

citizen.

Participants 1, 8, and 17 indicated that psychological testing prior to employment,

periodic testing during employment and psychological testing after a police-citizen use of

force encounters should be within policing policy for PBSO and all policing agencies.

Participant 8 explained:

I would like to see more psychological examination to make sure officers hired or

currently employed aren't the type of people that just want to exert power on

others, just because they feel powerless. There are so many unknowns that we

don't understand, having a psychological fit command person that is independent

and not biased in any possible way, who can keep the common ground between

citizens and police would protect everyone.

Participants 11, 12, 14, and 19 denoted that enhancing policing policy today through

congressional measures, ensuring checks and balances by governmental committees,

would be beneficial in the future to the safety of police officers and citizens. Many of

these participants explained that post incident there is a lot of media hype on some of the

high-profile cases of police use of deadly force, where policy change is discussed, but

nothing seems to be happening.

Participants 10 and 16 both discussed that perhaps changing leadership after these police-citizen use of force encounters would be beneficial. They claimed it would help to keep organizational structure and leadership in line. Participant 13 explained:

> After incidents of police use of force or deadly force, I think police should have a lie detector test, as well as for anyone else involved in the incident. I think that would be a great idea because the truth would come out whether it be good, bad, or indifferent.

Participants 4 and 6 had stated to the researcher that they did not have any experience in policing policy and would not be able to remark on what type of impact it has on the community or whether things should be different after police use of deadly force incidents occur.

After initial responses, participants viewed videos presented by the researcher, participants responses to the initial questions did not change. The video materials, although fresh in their mind, did not appear to have any influence on the participants original point of view. All participants were confident with their original answers with no changes to the second series of questioning.

Results

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the policy-specific, perceptional, and conceptual knowledge that citizens have about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters, to better understand whether social media, mass media, or community leaders influence or impact the knowledge citizens have about current use of force policing policy within Palm Beach County, Florida. 19

participants within Palm Beach County, Florida were recruited for this study. Those participants were asked a series of questions from an open-ended questionnaire, were shown videos following that questionnaire, and were further asked a second series of questions through another open-ended questionnaire. Three research questions were examined in this study:

RQ1: What is citizen's understanding regarding police use of force policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters?

RQ2: What type of influence, if any, does news media have on citizen's perceptions and knowledge regarding policing policies or police-citizen deadly force incidents?

RQ3: Do use-of-force, post incident opinions from the media or community leaders regarding deadly force by police impact citizen's perceptions of use of force policies?

In examining the lived experiences of citizens to understand their knowledge and perceptions about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters and whether media, social media, or community leaders influenced those perceptions, there were twelve specific themes that had emerged. Themes related to RQ1 were life or death, excessive force, good intentions, undecided. The themes related to RQ2 were communing with like-minded people, authenticity/legitimacy, conceptual knowledge, friends/family, social media/mass media/community leaders. For RQ3, themes were police accountability, police training, public education/community safety.

Data Analysis

For data analysis in this study, the researcher used the descriptive seven step phenomenological process (Colzizzi, 1978) to conduct the analysis of data. This is a seven step process to inquiry: (1) collection and transcription of data; (2) extract and formulate significance of meanings; (3) create a coding system to distinguish formulated meanings; (4) devise themes from formulated statements; (5) develop a comprehensive description of experiences articulated by participants; (6) interpret and analyze symbolic representations; and (7) identify fundamental essences of the phenomenon in an exhaustive description (Edward & Welch, 2011).

Participants in this study were located using a random purposeful sampling method based on a specific criterion using a recruitment questionnaire to determine if individuals fit criteria for the study, and if they would be willing to participate in a study for academic purposes. Prior to the selection of the participant pool, some adjustments to the population needed to be changed to account for linguistics deficiencies on the part of the researcher. The researcher only speaks and understands English. This was a necessary change for credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of this study. These changes will be explained further in this chapter.

Prior to conducting interviews, participants were thanked for their willing participation and after interviews were complete participants were thanked again. The researcher transcribed all interview data. Each participant received their transcription through private email, and they were able to review and determine if the researcher captured accurate, valid, and complete representations of their narratives. There were two

participants that returned their transcription with some minor grammatical errors, and the researcher applied those edits noted. This cross checking of data was to help ensure the reliability, dependability, and the transferability of data.

A qualitative software program, AQUAD Seven, to analyze data collected from participants was utilized in addition to using descriptive phenomenological process to inquiry (Colaizzi, 1978), to enhance the dependability and confirmability of this study. The qualitative software assisted with organizing the data and formulating any themes that might have been missed in the hand calculation of data. The qualitative software, AQUAD Seven, did not find any additional themes that had not be already identified when performing coding of the data by hand using descriptive phenomenological process to inquiry (Colaizzi, 1978). This process assisted in the confirmability and consistency of any present themes and coded data.

Evidence and Trustworthiness

Participants in this study were located using a random purposeful sampling method based on a specific criterion using a recruitment questionnaire. To determine if individuals fit criteria for the study, and if they would be willing to participate in a study for academic purposes. Prior to the selection of the participant pool, some adjustments to the population needed to be changed to account for linguistics deficiencies on the part of the researcher. The researcher only speaks and understands English. This was a necessary change for credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of this study. These changes will be explained further in this chapter.

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Summary

The goal of this study was to examine and understand public knowledge and perceptions about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters. A summary of the findings is detailed within this chapter.

In relation to RQ1, seven of the 19 participants (37%) had specific knowledge about PBSO's police use of force policy and 18 participants (95%) had never viewed those policies. Participants had little, to no, policy-specific knowledge with respect to policing policies about police use of force. Fourteen participants out of 19 (74%), received knowledge about policing policies on police-citizen deadly force encounters from mass media or social media, resulting in participants having more perceptual and conceptual knowledge about this issue.

The researcher found participants opinions about use of force compared to their understanding of it quite intriguing. Participants' opinions varied regarding whether use of deadly force was good, bad, or indifferent. Responses from participants were evenly

scored, where five participants replied good, five replied bad, five replied undecided and four replied that use of deadly force should only be used in life or death situations. However, when it came to understanding use of force policies, 18 out of 19 participants (95%) had never read the policy, nor did they know who established them.

Regarding RQ2, participants were steadfast about how their opinions and perceptions about police-citizen use of deadly force incidents were unwavering. However, four out of the 19 participants (21%) did report listening to other opinions and perceptions about certain high-profile cases. There were no participants who claimed they were influenced in a positive manner by media about police. Sixteen out of the 19 participants (84%) revealed that they were confused by the reports from mass media about use of deadly force incidents.

The researcher also found that although participants reported that they were confused by media reports about police use of force incidents, only seven participants found that community leaders were truthful when speaking to the media about those incidents of deadly force. Even so, 10 participants out of the 19 (53%) reported that they were not impact or influenced by community leaders, mass media, or social media. Most participants, 11 out of 19, (59%) discussed matters pertaining to use of force with friends who they stated were like-minded in their views or perceptions about use of force incidents seen on social media or mass media.

Regarding RQ3, participants again indicated that they were steadfast about their opinions and perceptions about police-citizen deadly force encounters, post incident, with no substantial positive impact on their perceptions about police or policing policies.

Although most participants' indicated that they obtained most of their knowledge from mass media or social media and did not trust the information they received from those sources, nine participants out of 19 (47%) claimed that police were not held accountable for their actions after police-citizen deadly force actions.

An overwhelming number of participants received their knowledge, post incident, from mass media and social media sources. But even though participants relied on these sources for knowledge, knowingly admitted these sources to be unreliable and not truthful. The researcher noted that citizen's perceptions regarding police use of force incidents post incident as reported by mass media and social media were mostly impacted negatively. Most participants indicated that statements given by public leaders and mass media were constructed in a way that fit their own agenda and failed to support Palm Beach County community efforts of safety and security or remorse for the victims of these tragic events.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the policy-specific, perceptional, and conceptual knowledge that citizens have about policing policies and police-citizens deadly force encounters, to gain a better understanding of whether media, social media, or community leaders influence or impact the knowledge citizens have about the current use of force policing policy within Palm Beach County, Florida.

The researcher was surprised with some of the results in this study. When it came to the participant's understanding of policing policies, the researcher was surprised that

some participants had little to knowledge of the policies. It was also perplexing that most participants had no specific knowledge of where the policies came from or who exactly established those policies. Moreover, it was intriguing to the researcher that participants have such strong opinions about police-citizen use of force encounters, however, had no policy-specific knowledge about it.

The researcher also found the results to be perplexing that most participants denoted how mass media and social media were bias, untruthful, and unreliable, but participants obtained at least 90% of their knowledge from mass media or social media about police use of force, deadly force, and policing policies. The researcher was also surprised that there was an overwhelming number of participants that had received a great deal of their knowledge about police-citizen force encounters and deadly force encounters, post incident, from mass media and social media sources even though participants admittingly claimed those sources were unreliable and untruthful. The researcher also found it interesting that citizen's perceptions about police-citizen deadly force encounters, post incident, were almost always negatively impacted as participants signified extreme negative statements against officers and policing leadership.

In Chapter 5, the researcher will further discuss the findings in this study and discuss the impact on social change this study might have, including any recommendations for future exploration of these issues.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the policy-specific, perceptional, and conceptional knowledge that citizens have about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters, to gain a better understanding of whether the media, social media, or community leaders influence or impact the knowledge citizens have about current use of force policing policies within Palm Beach County, Florida.

This study also involved examining and understanding whether family, friends, and coworkers might have an impact on citizens' policy-specific, conceptual, or perceptional knowledge about police use of force as it relates to deadly force. Data produced from this study were examined in-depth to determine how citizens' knowledge on use of force policy differs, and whether there were any patterns of commonalities within responses. Data were also examined for any commonalities participants had pertaining to influence that the media, social media, or community leaders had if any at all, on participants' perceptions about policing policy and police-citizen use of force encounters.

This study involved random purposeful sampling strategies in conjunction with criterion sampling. Random purposeful sampling strategies were helpful in the identification of participants and selection of randomized information-rich cases. The implementation of criterion sampling was particularly useful in allowing the researcher to select those individuals from the random purposeful sample that fit the criteria outlined in

this study to provide a more significant explanation of the phenomenon of interest. The phenomenological design in this study allowed for an emergent design which permitted the researcher to respond to the various realities and experiences of participants, but not interject personal realities or experiences.

The following research questions were the foundational background for interview questions conducted during this phenomenological study:

RQ1: What is citizen's understanding regarding police use of force policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters?

RQ2: What type of influence, if any, does news media have on citizen's perceptions and knowledge regarding policing policies or police-citizen deadly force incidents?

RQ3: Do use-of-force, post incident opinions from the media or community leaders regarding deadly force by police, impact citizen's perceptions of use of force policies?

The goal of this study was to interview 25 participants. However, saturation was reached after 19 interviews with participants. These 19 interviews were conducted with participants at the local public library. The researcher began interviews with participants on June 20, 2019 and ended September 30, 2019.

A descriptive seven-step phenomenological process model (Colazizzi, 1978) was used to conduct data analysis. AQUAD Seven was also used to analyze data collected from participants, to enhance the dependability and confirmability of this study. AQUAD

Seven assisted with organizing data and formulating any themes that might have been missed during hand calculation of data.

The researcher found that when it came to participants' understanding of police use of force policies, some participants had little to no knowledge of where the policies came from or who exactly established those policies. Many participants had no policy-specific knowledge about police use of force policies. The researcher also found that most participants indicated that mass media and social media were biased, untruthful, and unreliable, but they obtained at least 90% of their knowledge about police use of force policies, deadly force incidents, and police-citizen encounters of force from mass media or social media.

Interpretation of the Findings

The aim of this study was to examine citizen's policy-specific, conceptual, and perceptional knowledge on police use of force policy that pertains to deadly force, to gain a better understanding of any factors that may influence this public knowledge within Palm Beach County, Florida. Klinger (2008) said that the state of Florida was least likely to report police use of force incidents to a federal or state database, making the task of obtaining information on policing policy related to use of force difficult. Currently, there are no known qualitative studies in Florida that have attempted to examine policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters from citizen's policy-specific knowledge or conceptual perceptions of police.

In examining the lived experiences of the public to understand their knowledge and perceptions about policing policy pertaining to police use of deadly force and

whether media, social media, or community leaders influenced those perceptions. Themes that emerged relating to RQ1 were life or death, excessive force, good intentions, and undecided. Participants detailed how these four themes related to their perceptions about police, policing policy, and police use of deadly force. Only seven of the 19 participants (37%) had specific knowledge about PBSO police use of force policy and 18 participants (95%) had never viewed those policies. Fourteen participants received knowledge about police use of force from mass media or social media, resulting in having more perceptional and conceptual knowledge about this issue.

Participants' opinions varied regarding whether use of deadly force was good, bad, or indifferent. Responses from participants were evenly scored. Five participants replied good, five replied bad, five replied undecided, and four participants replied that use of deadly force should only be used in life or death situations. However, when it came to understanding use of force policies, 18 out of 19 participants (95%) had never read the policies, nor did they know who established them.

The inability of earlier studies on police use of force to determine the dynamic nature involved within police-citizen encounters (Klam & Tilyer, 2010), may contribute to the confusion and lack of understanding attached to clarifying varying elements involved in these occurrences. When police-citizen encounters occur involving force, police and citizens generally have opposing perceptions of the encounter and often accuse officers of using excessive force. This opposition in perception between the public and the police in these encounters are well-recognized within the literature. Documentation about use of force policies are available through a public records request from local,

county, or state law enforcement organizations, even so, some agencies will not allow the public to view their use of force continuum. This could be a contributing factor to why individuals are not very knowledgeable about police use of force policies, and why they seek information elsewhere, such as through media and social media. A more extensive based research should be done to address the public's lack of policy-specific knowledge on policing policy (Campbell, et al., 2018).

In examining RQ2 there were several factors that contributed to citizen's perceptions about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters. Participants explained that most of their knowledge about use of deadly force and policing policies came from the internet, social media sites, mass media, or like-minded family or friends. Most participants indicated that in discussing policing issues with family or friends, their opinions were likely not changed from any small debates of the issue because, they were all like-minded in their views. The themes that emerged relating to RQ2 were communing with like-minded people, authenticity/legitimacy, conceptual knowledge, friends/family, social media/mass media/community leaders.

Regarding RQ2 participants were steadfast about how their opinions and perceptions about police-citizen deadly force incidents were unwavering. Four participants(21%) reported that they did listen to other's opinions or perceptions about certain high-profile cases, their opinion rarely changed. There were no participants that indicated they were influenced in a positive manner by media about police. 16 participants (84%) revealed they were confused by the reports from mass media when viewing reports surrounding police use of deadly force incidents.

To comprehend the dynamics involved in police-citizen deadly force encounters Thomas and Lee (2004) explained, the public should want to acquire a better understanding of the various aspects of police work, including deadly force because it is important to maintain a well-informed community. Staying informed and knowledgeable about policing policies are vital for communities because statements given by community leaders are altered to meet the media's own persuasive agenda for public viewing, adding confusion for the public of the intended message to be received. Cialdini et al. (2006) stated that, when community leaders act publicly against a societal problem, the public may be misguided by community leaders into believing that these problematic events are occurring more frequently within the community.

Similarly, social media also plays a major contribution today in the agitation of public perceptions and debates on perceived civil liberty infringements, especially when they are allegedly done by an officer against a citizen (Gerber & Jackson, 2017). Reported stories on criminal activity by the media, often made viral by the public on social media, create a sociological chain of events for citizens that define public perceptions about the legitimacy of police. Garland (2008) denoted that, it only takes a single individual, a group of individuals, or a specific incident to create a threat to societal values and interests, such as those repeated broadcasts of stereotypical and alleged criminal infractions by media and within social media venues. A more narrowed research study should be conducted on the varying types of influences that media, social media, and public leaders have on the perceptions of the public, to better understand the

various types of influences, whether negative or positive, and its effect on communities as whole.

For RQ3 there was much discussion from participants regarding the extent to which officers and their agency's accept responsibility for publicly perceived wrongful actions. Participants had varied opinions and perceptions about police transparency and accountability. Some participants discussed policing policy options and signified that police training should be a priority for PBSO. Other participants indicated that public education, policing education, and public safety should be a higher priority to PBSO. There were a few participants that thought policing polices as they stood were effective and efficient. In RQ3 the themes that emerged were, police accountability, police training, public education/community safety.

Regarding RQ3, participants indicated that they were steadfast about their opinions and perceptions about police-citizen deadly force encounters, post incident. There was no substantial positive impact on participants perceptions about police or policing policies. Although most participants indicated that they obtained most of their knowledge from mass media or social media and didn't trust the information they received from those sources, 9 participants (47%) claimed police were not held accountable for their actions after use of deadly force and force actions.

An overwhelming number of participants received their knowledge, post incident, from mass media and social medial sources. Although participants relied on these sources for knowledge, participants knowingly admitted these sources were unreliable and untruthful. The public's perceptions of police use of force occurrences reported by mass

media and social media, post incident, impacted citizen's perceptions of police negatively. Most participants indicated that statements given by public leaders and mass media were constructed in a way that fit their own agenda and failed to support efforts for Palm Beach County community safety and security and had little remorse for the victims of these tragic events.

When police-citizen force encounters occur, the police and citizens generally have opposing perceptions of the encounter and often accuse officers of using excessive force. Miller (2015) denotes that, annual incidents of police use of deadly force in the U.S. only average out to approximately 360 cases per year. Fatal shootings by police and the annual totals of such shootings, statistically tend to fluctuate, but due to repeated media coverage these shootings can appear to be abundant (Campbell, et al., 2018). In the late 1970's federal sanctions that were legally bound and upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in the mid 1960's was then expanded, to include both the state and local governmental agencies (Peters & Brave, 2007).

The main purpose of the force continuum model and its design was to hold officers accountable for their actions. The design of the continuum was to designate constructs in accordance with police legal liabilities, making the guidelines practical for the safety of officers, the public, and the protection of victims of crime (Aveni, 2005). Due to the rapid escalation in some police-citizen encounters, the linear steps of the continuum are not often aligned with the quick decisions officers' make to protect themselves or someone else, rendering these models irrelevant (Hough & Tatum, 2012; Lee & Vaughn, 2010; Terrill & Paoline, III, 2013; Wallentine, 2009).

Mass media, social media, and community leaders all play a role in influencing community perceptions about the legitimacy of police and their actions. Statements given by community leaders are altered to meet the media's own persuasive agenda for public viewing, adding confusion for the public of the intended message to be received (Cialdini et al., 2006; Kingshott, 2011; Kunstler, 2013, Zillman, 2006). Statements or actions by community leaders are often counterproductive and frequently induce an undesirable societal response. Similarly, social media also plays a major contribution today in the agitation of public perceptions and debates on perceived civil liberty infringements, especially when they are allegedly done by an officer against a citizen.

The pubic holds various perceptions about police and their actions. These perceptions predominately come from media reports, social media platforms, or public observations of these police-citizen force encounters. Rojek, et al., (2012) examined the perceptions of both the police and citizens on deadly force encounters, after the force encounter occurred. There were remarkable differences on individual perceptions between the police and a citizen's viewpoint regarding the same incident (Rojek, et al, 2012). Similarly, Gerber and Jackson (2017) assessed empirical links between police legitimacy and the public's support for police use of force of unarmed individuals. Much of the debate on the legitimacy of policing practices focus on the implicit bias in the expressed authority of officers, and an emphasis on whether officers involved in illegitimate practices are ever really held accountable for their actions (Gerber & Jackson, 2017) To understand the public's perceptions of deadly force encounters, policing policies, influences of media, social media, and community leaders, theories of

exemplification should be explored to determine the types of affects, if any, they have on the public's perceptions of police.

Berger and Luckman (1966) agreed with Marx's (1818-1883) work that human knowledge is mainly acquired by mutual relationships among people, and through the processes of human thoughts and vocalizations of content that arises with each encounter (Berger & Luckman, 1966). To understand the connection between reality and knowledge, in-depth qualitative analysis is predominately used to explain personal perceptions of individuals with real life experience in the social world. The social construct of reality is an extended examination into the role of knowledge and is based on the interactions of individuals and society. This helps provide a virtual and corresponding perspective of sociological understanding, as to the role of knowledge within ones' own personal identity and their social structures (Andrews, 2012; Berger and Luckman, 1996; Karl Marx, 1883). To gain a better understanding of the various types of perceptions that the public has about policing policy and police-citizen deadly force encounters, it is imperative to do a more narrowed research study to examine where that knowledge comes from (i.e., individual beliefs or thoughts, community leaders commentary, social media platforms, mass media, etc.).

Zillmann (2006) explained that exemplification theory addresses the formation and modification of beliefs about phenomena that people have experienced or witnessed, both directly and indirectly. When the media frequently reports on similar policing occurrences for news stories using exemplars, it demonstrates to the public that there is a critical problem on an issue, such a s deadly force (Gerber & Jackson, 2017; Zillmann,

2006). Zillman (1999) stated, when objective information is substituted in the public psyche by media exemplification and then expanded upon through individuals' conceptual or personal experiences. Those individuals' perceptions and experiences are repeatedly conveyed to others within society. It would be helpful to have a more narrowed research study conducted on the varying types of conceptual and influences that media, social media, and public leaders have on how opinions formed, post incident, and impact citizen's perceptions on police use of force policies.

Limitations

There were several limitations in this study in terms of both its scope and its findings. The first limitation to note within this study would be in its small sample size that was segregated to a select population geographically located within Palm Beach County, Florida. The small sample size did prohibit the generalization of findings to other Florida law enforcement agencies or citizen populations within other geographical locales within the United States. Second, finding individuals that wanted to participate in this study within a family park setting proved to be more difficult than the researcher thought it would be. Many families were at the park with their children and did not want to discuss such a controversial and violent issue in front of, or with, their children present.

Thirdly, the research has many associations with law enforcement, public leaders, and the media on a daily basis and is privy to some internal information otherwise not available to the public. Therefore, the following steps were taken to implement epoche: The researcher took steps to discontinue associations with all law enforcement, public leadership, community, and media accounts on social media and avoided watching any

local or state news that pertained to police use of force, policing policy, or police-citizen encounters of deadly force until the analysis of this study was complete.

Lastly, the conceptual framework devised in this study was unique, crossing the philosophical boundaries of sociological interpretation of policing policies. The framework used within this study was not one that would typically be done in studies that attempt to examine and understand both, human behavior and police use of force policies. The researcher found this conceptual framework to be both useful and dependable in relation to examining and understanding public perceptions, conceptualizations, and policy-specific knowledge about policing policies, police use of force, and police-citizen deadly force encounters.

Recommendations

The main purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the policy-specific, perceptional, and conceptual knowledge that citizens have about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters, to understand whether media, social media, or community leaders influence or impact the knowledge citizens have about current policing policies in Palm Beach County, Florida. There is a lack of educational program development by PBSO to address this absence of citizens knowledge about policing policies.

Moreover, there is a lack of scientific data defining citizen's conceptual and policy-specific knowledge about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force incidents and the influential connection, both positive and negative, that exists between media, social media, and community leaders that alter public perceptions, conceptual

knowledge, or policy-specific knowledge on those policing policies and police-citizen force encounters discussed.

Recommendations for future study may include a broader based qualitative phenomenological approach to ascertain the various types of impacts that media, social media and community leaders have on citizen's perceptions about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters, both negatively and positively. The expansion of the phenomenological approach would also assist with obtaining a more cumulative perspective on the reporting of media, social media, and community leaders. Including their impact within varying metropolitan cities across the U.S., to understand if varied populations or groups are affected differently from those influencers, related to policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters.

Due to the fact that there are few qualitative studies that examine public perceptions and attitudes toward police (Gerber & Jackson, 2017; Hough & Tatum, 2012), a second recommendation for future studies should be considered with qualitative inquiry into the public's knowledge about policing policies, specifically related to police use of force policies. An extensive exploration into the publics knowledge to gain a better understanding of, how negative perceptions are formed by citizens, where distrust or de-legitimization comes from, and if media exemplification plays a mitigating factor in those negative perceptions about police and policing policy.

Thirdly, in recent years police use of deadly force has become an extremely controversial and rapidly growing conversation across the nation, dividing the public and police, while uniting some in the name of justice (Gerber & Jackson, 2017; Campbell, et

al. 2018). Therefore, the researcher recommends that policing agencies development educational programs to disseminate information to the public about why police use of force policies are enforced or necessary, when those policies will be enforced, and where the policies are available if the public would like to review copies of their departments use of force policies. The researcher would also recommend that Palm Beach County policing agencies provide educational materials in the form of public service announcements (PSAs) that inform citizen's about operational procedures to keep officers and the public safe during police-citizen encounters. These types of initiatives could help with agency transparency, legitimacy, and minimize the citizen's presumption of racial profiling, which seemingly occurs, prior to any escalation of deadly force in police-citizen encounters.

Implications for Social Change

In this study, there are several significant implications for social change with regard to citizens knowledge about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters, that may be crucial for the security of the public and the legitimacy of law enforcement within Palm Beach County, Florida. Broadening citizen's comprehension and understanding about police use of force policies, and deadly force, will help to address some of the underlying concerns of citizens about police transparency and legitimacy, while strengthening both officer and citizen safety. When it came to understanding use of force polices, 18 out of 19 participants had never read the local Sheriff department's policing policies, nor did they know who established them. Although participants within this study reported that they were confused by media reports

about police use of force incidents, only seven participants out of 19 found that

community leaders were truthful when speaking to the media about police-citizen deadly

force incidents.

Moreover, this study will best serve citizens, communities, and policing agencies

within Palm Beach County, Florida, but could also perhaps benefit those surrounding

geographical areas or even other states with similar demographics. If citizens were

provided with policy-specific knowledge about the fundamentals and ideology of use of

policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters, it may enhance police

legitimacy, strengthen pubic trust, and provide the promotion of mutual support for

cooperative relations between citizens and the police. Exemplified media broadcasts that

spread swiftly across social media platforms can be detrimental to the enactment of

positive policing reforms or policy enhancements for the criminal justice system and the

safety of the public. The occurrence of rapid information sharing through media or

through communities, should be a concern for all criminology professions because it

lacks the policy-specific knowledge that the public should be receiving on policing

policies.

Furthermore, the contribution of this research on police use of force will be

extremely beneficial in identifying and establishing an accurate baseline in understanding

both citizens knowledge and perceptions about police-citizen deadly force encounters, the

meaning of authenticity of community leaders to the citizens of Palm Beach County, and

the impacts of media and how information is conveyed to the public. The public views

police officers and their agencies negatively due to overzealous media reports and puts

public safety within communities at risk because of the negative media imagery of police officers. This study will encourage change to the ideology of police and policing policies to help promote a positive move forward with future resolutions between communities and the police.

This study aimed to represent a more diverse population to represent a more natural based population within communities. Helping citizens to understand that regardless of ones, ethnicity, educational background, race, religion, or gender, that everyone comprehends information received from media and social settings differently with varying outcomes. Understanding these elements will provide citizen's, their communities, a better understanding of the diversity of people's personal views and experiences about policing policies, media representations, and police-citizen deadly force encounters. Providing a clearer understanding of where public knowledge and perceptions on police use of force policies related to deadly force come from, with the justifications that criminal justice policymakers need in determining better measures for transparency between the public and the police.

The researcher in this study would recommend that PBSO make their policing policies easily accessible to the public. The findings from this research study supports previous studies and asserts that here is a lack of educational programs developed by PBSO in addressing the absence of public knowledge about policing policies. There should be more community held educational outreach from PBSO to provide citizens with informative and correct information about policing policies and police use of deadly force actions. Especially for those in underserved socioeconomic statuses, because

attitudes of police mistrust of law enforcement seem to play a more significant role in these communities (Brown & Benedict, 2002).

Due to the fact that there are few qualitative studies that examine public perceptions and attitudes toward police (Gerber & Jackson, 2017; Hough & Tatum, 2012), recommendations for future studies that are qualitative based should be considered for the examination into public knowledge about policing policies related to police use of force actions. An extensive exploration into the publics knowledge to gain a better understanding of, how negative perceptions are formed by citizens, where distrust or de-legitimization comes from, and if media exemplification plays a mitigating factor in those negative perceptions about police and policing policies.

Reflections of the Researcher

The research process for this study was challenging to say the least. This study would have been better served if the researcher would have narrowed down the topic to better address either, citizens knowledge about use of force policies, or to focus merely on the influential function that media plays when it comes to people's perceptions about police-citizen encounters on police-citizen deadly force encounters. The fact that this paper was educational bound to address a policy perspective was difficult for the researcher and challenging on this specific subject matter.

The use of several different conceptual frameworks on this subject matter was rewarding but also challenging, since this mixed framework had never been used in any other study. The researcher does believe that this was the best option for a conceptual framework that could have been used in this study, because of the multifaceted

phenomenon being explored in this qualitative study. The use of epoche was also helpful in maintaining good credibility and reliability for this research. Recommendations for the use of this in all qualitative studies would prove beneficial in the improvement and accuracy of study results.

There were several noteworthy experiences that the researcher took from this study. Although the researcher did not have any personal biases, the researcher admits to having some preconceived notions about citizens and media. The researcher thought that most participants in this study would believe what media presented in their broadcasts about police-citizen force encounters and policing policies. It was surprising to the researcher to see that a large percentage of participants found that media and social media venues were unreliable and untruthful, but that citizens still relied upon these sources for their general venue of receiving valuable information concerning policing policies and police-citizen use of force incidents.

The researcher also thought that most of citizens would not tend to believe what community leaders had to say publicly about these police-citizen deadly force encounters. This is not what the results of this study held, and this was quite astonishing to the researcher. The position of Sheriff within Palm Beach County, like many other counties, is an elected position. In this study many participants had various ideologies of the local Sheriff and his performance of, and within, PBSO. Some participants had stated that they didn't find the local Sheriff's statements to the media to be truthful or reliable when it came to investigations of police-citizen deadly force encounters. The researcher, at the beginning of this study and prior to interviewing, had an assumed that citizens would

disagree with community leaders, but was surprised that those disagreements or disapprovals were to the extent they were in the results of this study.

Upon conducting this study, the research assumed that a small percentage of citizens probably did not have much policy-specific knowledge about policing policies or police-citizen deadly force encounters. The reason for this assumption was based on past research studies that explained that, in most states these policies are not available for public view. According to the results of this study, this may be a fundamental reason that citizens do not have policy-specific knowledge about policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters. 18 of the participants in this study had no knowledge about who made PBSO's policing policies, where they came from, or the fundamentals of how they were used. The information learned from this study has lead the researcher to understand that a lot of citizens have varying perceptions and opinions about police-citizen force encounters, and most of those opinions are gained from the individuals that are around us in our own personal social groups, through a series of socialized banter and opinionated conversations.

<div align="center">**Conclusion**</div>

The phenomenon of police-citizen deadly force encounters and policing policies regarding these actions have been debated by the media, scholars, law enforcement and society for centuries. Provoking civil unrest and such actions as ambush killings of police officers. This study does not support findings that police-citizen deadly force incidents occur often, or that the people who retaliate against police know what policing, transparency, or legitimacy even mean.

Citizens perceptions about policing policies and police-citizen encounters of
deadly force may be motivated purely by media and social media outlets. Much of the
citizens that were interviewed in this study had no idea whether PBSO had policing
policies on use of force, or how these policies were developed. Most citizens had extreme
negativity towards officers and PBSO in general. A large percentage of participants in
this study claimed to receive most of their information from the media and social media.
Even though many participants stated that the media and social media were unreliable
and not trustworthy, they still relied on these sources for their primary information about
policing policies and police-citizen deadly force encounters.

The knowledge that citizens have about policing policies and police-citizen use of
force encounters is conceptual and perceptional knowledge only. A small percentage of
citizens, even if available to citizens, did not show an interest in being able to view
PBSO's policing policies on police use of force. The stated that they might view them if
it were necessary after an incident of force had occurred. Instead of using policy-specific
knowledge and being educated on policing policies to understand the division between
PBSO and citizens, citizens will continue to criticize PBSO, the sheriff, and officers any
legalities of error, uneducated about PBSO's policing policies.

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Initial Interview with Participants (Phase 1) Open Ended Questionnaire
"There are always two sides to policy: Police use of deadly force"

1. What is your position and/or your opinion about police use of deadly force in Palm Beach County?

2. Where do you get your primary information about:
      a. police use of force incidents when they occur?
      b. police use of force incidents after they occur?
      c. police use of force incidents at the moment they are occurring?

3. Have you, a family member, or friend ever personally experienced and/or witnessed a police use of force incident in Palm Beach County, and if so, how did that make you feel about police use of deadly force?

4. Do you discuss and/or talk about use of force incidents with your friends and family, and do these discussions change your perception about police use of force deadly encounters?

5. Where do you obtain the most knowledge about incidents involving police use of deadly force encounters (i.e.., friends, family, public leaders, Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, news, social media)? Do you believe these sources to be truthful and/or reliable, as to the information you are receiving?

6. Did you know that PBSO has a use of force policy? If so, have you ever personally requested and/or viewed Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office Use of Force Policies that are used by the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office? And do you know who establishes these policies for the agency?

7. Do you think the policing agencies, or the officer's themselves, are perceived negatively after police use of deadly force incidents? Why or why not?

8. Do you think media reports, on use of deadly force incidents, add to the confusion about police-citizen encounters of deadly force when those reports are "on-scene", live streaming, or broadcasting from the freshly unfolding scene? Why or why not?

9. Does it give you a greater sense of legitimacy to see community leaders, such as the Sheriff on scene and making comments to the public about police-citizen encounters of deadly force when they occur? Why or why not?

10. If you had to guess, what percentage of the public within Palm Beach County do you think have actual knowledge about Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office policing policies on police use of force?

11. Do you believe that you receive more knowledge when community leaders (like the sheriff or mayor) come forward to explain police-citizen encounters of deadly force that, are occurring or have occurred?

12. Does statements given by and/or the presence of, the sheriff, mayor, and/or community leaders, on-scene or after a police-citizen encounter of deadly force, influence or change your perception, positively or negatively about the event? Why?

13. Can you outline to the best of your knowledge, or by guessing, what the PBSO police policy is on use of force? Why do you believe the things you outlined are important to police use of force policy?

14. Do you believe that officers are held accountable prior to, during, and after use of force incidents? In other words, are you confident with PBSO investigative methods in police use of deadly force incidents?

15. What protocols, policies, and/or procedures do you believe PBSO should have in place to address police use of deadly force incidents? What do you think agency protocol should be during, or after an incident occurs?

Second Phase interview questions and Post Video Questionnaire with Participants

AFTER VIEWING THE VIDEO CLIPS ON VARIOUS POLICE-CITIZEN INCIDENTS OF DEADLY FORCE, COMMENTARY BY THE MEDIA, POLICE CAMS, AND STATEMENTS GIVEN BY COMMUNITY LEADERS, AS WELL AS NOW HAVING SEEN THE USE OF FORCE POLICY OF PBSO PARTICIPANTS WILL ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think media reports, on use of deadly force incidents, add to the confusion about police-citizen encounters of deadly force when those reports are "on-scene", live streaming, or broadcasting from the freshly unfolding scene? Why or why not?

2. Does it give you a greater sense of legitimacy to see community leaders, such as the Sheriff on scene and making comments to the public about police-citizen encounters of deadly force when they occur? Why or why not?

3. Do you, as the receiver of those media or on-scene broadcasts, believe that you are receiving information that is factual from the media about the police-citizen deadly force encounter? Why or why not?

4. What protocols, policies, and/or procedures do you believe PBSO should have in place to address police use of deadly force incidents? Why do you think these changes would be beneficial to the public?

5. Do you think it would be necessary for PBSO to change any policies, procedures or protocols having to do with their police use of force policy? Why or why not?

Initial Participant Recruitment Questionnaire
"There are always to sides to policy: Police use of deadly force"

1. What is your gender?
     a. Male
     b. Female
     c. Other

2. How long have resided in Palm Beach County?
     a. 0-5 years
     b. 5-10 years
     c.10-15 years

3. What is your race?
     a. White/Caucasian
     b. Black/African American/Haitian/Jamaican
     c. Hispanic/Cuban/Dominican/Puerto Rican
     d. Native American/Indian
     e. European/Asian/Australian
     f. Other

4. What is your age group?
     a. 25-30
     b. 31-40
     c. 41-50
     d. 51-55

5. Do you have a religious preference?
     a. Catholic
     b. Islam/Muslim
     c. Hindu
     d. Christian
     e. Buddhist
     f. Methodist
     g. Presbyterian
     h. Anglican

i. Pentecostal

j. Other

6. What is your educational level?

a. High school graduate

b. Some College/Technical School/Trade School

c. Associate's Degree

d. Bachelor's Degree

c. Master's Degree

d. Doctoral Degree

e. Other

7. Are you associated with law enforcement in any of the following ways?

a. Family

b. Close friends

c. Friends of friends

d. Employee of a policing agency

e. None of the above

8. Have you ever been approached by a police officer and received a minor infraction?

a. Yes

b. No

9. Have you ever been approached by a police officer and received a major criminal charge?

a. Yes

b. No

10. Have you ever been convicted of a crime, greater than a misdemeanor?

a. Yes

b. No

11. Would you like to provide Jana Cole, the student researcher, with your contact information for possible participation in a 4 hour research study.

a. Yes

b. No

Name:_____

Your preferred method of
contact:(telephone/email):_____