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The Impact of Media Representation of Police Use of Force on Minority Students' Intentions to Pursue Criminal Justice Degrees

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Walden University

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Stacey S. White

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

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Intentions to Pursue Criminal Justice Degrees

by

Stacey S. White

BS, Purdue Global University, 2010

MS, Purdue Global University, 2014

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

In recent years, reports of police use of force incidents have proliferated across traditional and social media. The extent and nature of the impact of these reports on the relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve have received significant attention from scholars and researchers. In addition, a growing body of literature examining the impact of the media on communities of color and their relationships with and perspectives on law enforcement also exists. However, there is gap in the research on the effect of media coverage of police use of force incidents on minority criminal justice students. In this study, the perspectives of 10 African American and Latinex individuals currently or withdrawn from an accredited undergraduate criminal justice program within the previous 3 months were explored through semistructured interviews. The interview subjects were located in the state of Oklahoma and identified as consumers of traditional and social media. The goal was to understand if, and how, media coverage of police use of force incidents impacted these students' perspectives on and decision to pursue a criminal justice degree. The study revealed that there was a potential for medias to have an emotional impact on the participants' decisions on whether to continue with their criminal justice degree. Concerns over personal safety had as much influence as the negative connotation of police use of force incidents on the decisions of former criminal justice students to withdraw from their programs. These finding may be used by criminal justice programs to create positive social change by mediating their students' beliefs and promoting transparency between the police and public.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

In this study, I sought to examine the impact of media representation of police use of force incidents on minority criminal justice students who are currently pursuing their undergraduate degree. Particular focus was placed on what effects, if any, these representations have on the students' intentions to complete their criminal justice degree. A qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews and rhetorical analysis was used to research the perspectives and academic choices of past, present, and prospective criminal justice students who are also members of a racial and/or ethnic minority group.

Problem Statement

In recent years, relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve have deteriorated significantly (Bell, 2017; Braga et al., 2019; Nix & Wolfe, 2018). This increasingly antagonistic relationship between police and the citizenry corresponds with pervasive and often highly negative representations of police use of force incidents in popular and social media (Nix & Wolfe, 2018). Current research suggests that the contemporary state of conflict between some law enforcement agencies and their communities may be attributable to the effects of media coverage of police use-of-force incidents (Nix & Wolfe, 2018; Pyrooz et al., 2016). However, none of the studies I found have centered specifically on the impact of these media representations on minorities who are also current criminal justice students. Research is needed on how media portrayals of police use of force incidents influence minority criminal justice

students. The inability to determine whether minority criminal justice students are deterred, motivated by, or indifferent to negative media representations of police use of force incidents has limited educators' ability to appropriately support minority criminal justice students in pursuit of their degree. I sought to answer the question of how media representations of police use of force incidents may affect a minority criminal justice student's decision to continue or withdraw from their criminal justice studies. The study may help bridge the gap in the current research by focusing specifically on minority criminal justice students who are either currently in a criminal justice program or have withdrawn from a criminal justice program. This is a demographic that has yet to be studied in research examining the impact of media representations of police on minority audiences. Of particular interest is the question of whether media representations of police use of force incidents may contribute to the failure of minority criminal justice students to complete their degree or continue their academic pursuits.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to better understand the effects of media coverage of police use of force incidents on minority students who are currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, as well as former minority criminal justice students who have chosen to leave their programs prior to completion. These populations were accessed through convenience sampling, with current and former student information provided by the researcher's contacts at the university. Candidates' contact information was provided to the researcher only with the prior consent of the student, which the researcher's contacts will obtain before sharing the students'

information with the researcher. In this study “minority” subjects were limited to those who self-identify as African-American or Latino. In 2019, Conkling asserted that social media portrayals have an impact on college student’s opinions of police brutality. However, no studies have been conducted to determine what effect these media portrayals of police use of force incidents have on minority criminal justice students. My study was designed to fill an existing gap in the research regarding the impact of media representations of law enforcement on the academic choices of current, aspiring, and former minority criminal justice students. This has resulted in an inability of educators and criminal justice program administrators to formulate appropriate and effective responses to media coverage in their efforts to support minority criminal justice students in their matriculation efforts. The goal of this study was to develop policy recommendations which can facilitate educator efforts to support minority criminal justice students through productive media consumption and management.. Though a few studies have been conducted to assess the impacts of media messaging on audience perceptions of and attitudes toward law enforcement, none found have examined the effects of media on minority criminal justice students. I sought to fill that gap, providing insight into how media affects minority criminal justice students, including determining whether these impacts deter, motivate, or exert not significant influence on this demographic.

Significance

The study was intended to provide a contribution in the field of criminal justice by filling a gap in the research surrounding the effects of media representation of police use-

of-force incidents on the decision of minority criminal justice students to continue or to abandon their degree path and aspirations to complete their criminal justice degree. Researchers do not yet know how media representations of police affect minority criminal justice students, specifically, whether media coverage exerts a deterrent, galvanizing, or neutral effect on these students. I sought to fill that gap and gather data needed to propose specific policy recommendations for supporting criminal justice programs and educator and administrator efforts to facilitate successful degree completion for minority criminal justice students through effective media consumption and management.

The thought that minority criminal justice students are impacted by media portrayals of police use of force strengthens the idea that if the influence is negative, then there could be actions taken to counter that influence by using media influence in the classroom by projecting objective thinking. If the influence is a motivator for the minority criminal justice students, then supporting the social change messages which exist within the media portrayals may be beneficial. It is conceivable that the demographical differences could apply as some researchers have discovered (Saenz, & Morales, 2019). Minority criminal justice students in Oklahoma were interviewed regarding their perceptions of media influence on their academics.

Additionally, significant to this study is a perception of some students that some academic establishments foster a liberal outlook and may project liberal ideologies onto their students (see Wills et al., 2019). While outside the scope of this study, this was a consideration when I developed questions for the participants. The results of this study

may indicate an association between media and social media influences on criminal justice students' perceptions.

Research Question

The following research questions guided my study:

RQ1: What influence does the traditional media's representation of police use of force incidents have on Oklahoma minority criminal justice students' decision to pursue a criminal justice degree?

RQ2: What influence does the social media's representation of police use of force incidents have on Oklahoma minority criminal justice students' decision to pursue a criminal justice degree?

Theoretical Framework

The study combined three principal theoretical lenses to facilitate study design, execution, and analysis. These were Bandura's social learning/social cognitive theory, Merton and Durkeim's anomie theory, and Hirshi's social control theory. These theories helped to define how perceptions, attitudes, and behavior are socially learned, reinforced, and renegotiated (citation). In addition, these theories helped to explain how perception and conduct are shaped in communities at risk. Finally, these theoretical lenses were used to assess how socially learned, approved, and enforced codes of conduct and perception operate as a means of social control. These had important implications for this study because they provided a framework for understanding how media consumption, sharing, and dissemination affects audience perceptions and behaviors.

A central concern of my study was to understand the influence of modern media and social media as a modality of unprecedented power in shaping the cognitions, perceptions, and behaviors of minority criminal justice students. Social networking theory was of particular value to the study insofar as the premise of the link between subject selves and nodes with which they are connected facilitates the analysis of the effects of relational processes in informing the perspectives and choices of minority criminal justice students. Within Milgram's framework, these students can be seen to occupy a node in which conflicting, opposing, or antagonistic ties converge. More specifically, these students occupy a nodal conjunction between minority experience and the U.S. criminal justice system. How these students perceive that experience was the main focus of my study.

Another foundational theory upon which the proposed study will be based is Merton and Durkheim's groundbreaking anomie theory, according to which deviant behaviors are seen to result from a fundamental breakdown of the social system, a breakdown in which individuals are thwarted in efforts to achieve goals they have been taught to perceive as valuable, desirable, or essential. When the mechanisms of the social structure prevent the attainment of social goods the individual has been taught by that same system to pursue, anomie occurs. According to this theory, anomie refers to the individual's purposeful disavowal of and opposition to social norms that were once valued, or potentially could have been valued by the individual. Anomie theory is fundamental to the proposed study inasmuch as modern media representations of police use-of-force incidents posit a social framework in which minority communities are

largely excluded from the social goods they have been taught to desire and to pursue-- with law enforcement, the very agents tasked with protecting and enforcing those social norms, serving also as the instruments through which minority communities' access to those normative goods and values is denied. Very much like Milgram's social network theory, then, the application of anomie theory to the present study situates minority criminal justice students at the nexus of forces which are, according to media representations, mutually annihilating. Within this framework, prevailing media representations will position these subjects as both the bulwark of societal norms and the inevitable apostate of those norms: at once law and lawbreaker.

Durkheim's and Merton's theories, therefore, provide a beneficial framework through which to assess the implications of the presumed shortcomings of ethical and social standards, as represented by traditional media and social media portrayals of police use-of-force incidents. For example, Durkheim's (1893) paradigm of "normlessness" describes a state where the expectations of behavior are unclear, and the normative system breaks down. Durkheim and Merton assert that behavioral norms and the associated pursuit of social goods are primarily inculcated via the individual's social, peer, and familial group and that "normlessness" is at root the failure of these traditional mechanism of normative values training by authority figures and peers. However, as will be explored in the proposed dissertation, the profound potency of modern media functions as a surrogate for the normative pedagogies once provided by the individual's social and familial group. The breakdown of the normative structure as exercised by the social group creates a vacuum which modern media powerfully fills. Durkheim's trope

will be applied to the forthcoming study insofar as it may be used to explain and assess a presumptive deterrent effect on minority criminal justice students seeking a career in criminal justice, for whom the abnegation or dismantling of the normative social structure, as represented by the modern media, may constitute for these subjects the erasure of the principal motivators for seeking a career in law enforcement. As such it will be prudent to research students' perceptions of being unable or unwilling to pursue their goals because of the combined effects of the disintegration of the normative social structure and of the strains within the social circles where they are members, similar to that in Merton's theory of deviance as a response to pernicious environmental stimuli.

Nature of the Study

I used a qualitative approach, centering upon interviews, to support phenomenological and discourse analysis. Qualitative research is appropriate for the purposes of the dissertation because it enables the study of participants' perceptions as well as the analysis of the discourse subjects use to describe their perspectives (see citation). By soliciting subjects' descriptions of their perceptions, experiences, opinions, and behavioral responses I sought to gather greater insight into how media representations impacts these students, their attitudes and choices, on both a conscious and subconscious level.

Definitions

The study did not incorporate terminology or usage outside of that which belongs to Standard American English usage, with the exception of the terms "minority" and

“criminal justice students.” Specifically, “minority” was used in this study to indicate subjects who self-identify as being of African American or Latino/a descent.

In this study, moreover, “criminal justice students” are defined as individuals who were actively enrolled at least part time in degree-conferring criminal justice programs or had withdrawn from such a program within three months of the study’s execution.

Assumptions

The study was based on the assumption that traditional and social media reports of police use of force events negatively impact minority criminal justice’s participation in degree-conferring programs. In keeping with this, the study assumed that significant exposure to these media reports decrease the likelihood that these students will complete their criminal justice degree or move forward with a career in law enforcement. In addition, the study was executed with the assumption that media coverage of police use of force incidents increased subjects’ sense of familial, peer, and community pressure to abandon the students’ chosen field of study or career plans.

Scope

The study was limited in scope, encompassing 10 interview subjects in the State of Oklahoma. In addition, the study was conducted over a limited period of time, encompassing a period of weeks for the collection of data through the completion of remote semistructured interviews.

Limitations

The limitations of the study were primarily logistical, having been designed and executed by a single researcher located in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area. The

study was also limited due to travel restrictions, lockdowns, and other public health constraints relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews were conducted virtually, rather than face-to-face, as a safety measure for both the researcher and the subjects. In addition, the study was limited due to the tight timeframe for completion, which required that the number of study subjects be reduced to protect the quality of data collection and analysis given the timeline.

Summary

The study used a qualitative research method to examine the effect of social and traditional media's reporting of police use of force incidents on minority criminal justice students in Oklahoma. The study used semistructured interviews to determine if, and how, media influences minority students' decision to complete, or to abandon, a degree in criminal justice. The study included 10 present and former minority criminal justice students who were interviewed individually through remote video conferencing. All subjects were recruited through convenience sampling, based on the subjects' self-nomination for participation in the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As indicated in the previous chapter, I sought assess the impact of media representations on police use of force incidents on minority criminal justice students, filling a gap in the literature. However, a significant body of literature currently exists to examine the effects of the media on communities at risk. This literature provided the academic foundation on which the study was built.

Introduction

An analysis of the extant academic literature indicates that significant research has been conducted on the impact of the media on perceptions of policing and law enforcement, particularly within minority communities. An expansive body of research, moreover, exists demonstrating the negative effects that media reports of police use of force incidents on relationships between police and the communities they serve. However, as shown below, relatively little research has been done on the impacts that media reports have on minority criminal justice students specific. The sections below describe the central themes evident in the extant literature.

Research Strategy

This literature review was based on the analysis of the extant literature published in peer-reviewed academic journals. A multi-search strategy was used to cull relevant articles from peer-reviewed journals. These databases were hosted on the Walden University platform, and all databases hosted on the platform were included in the search. The peer-reviewed and full-text filters were selected, and multiple database searches were conducted. The first limited the search to peer-reviewed articles published between 2015

and 2020. The search was then expanded to include articles published since 2010. After this, date filters were removed to determine if there were any high-level sources that should be included, based on the researcher's assessment of the source's applicability and utility to the study. English was chosen as the required article language, though place of publication was not specified. The search terms were combinations of "media" AND "police use of force" OR "shootings" AND "minority" AND "students" AND "criminal justice programs."

Negative Effects of Media Representations on Minority Audiences

A significant body of academic literature exists to demonstrate the negative effects of media representations on minority audiences' perceptions of law enforcement. For example, Donovan and Klahm (2015), Wolf and Nix (2016), and Nix and Pickett (2017) found that exposure to media significantly increased negative audience perceptions regarding law enforcement. This included increasing audiences' perceptions of racism within police departments, as well as increasing audiences' sense of a perceived threat posed by police toward minority communities due both to a perceived failure to protect and to perceived police violence. Add summary and synthesis to fully develop the paragraph and connect it to your research questions.

In the study conducted by Donovan and Klahm (2015), there were gaps which I hope to fill, such as the raw opinion data of minority criminal justice students of police use of force incidents in general and if those perceptions have an impact on the criminal justice student's desire to complete their studies. Another primary variable missing in the

study by Donovan and Klahm is the demographic variable. I focused my study on the demographics specific to Oklahoma.

In support of the works by Donovan and Klahm (2015), a more recent qualitative study was completed by Adams (2019). Adams took negative view of police use of force events. However, there are historical inaccuracies in Adam's work, making it an unreliable source. For instance, Adams claims that the shooting of Trayvon Martin was an officer involved shooting, when in fact that is not the case since George Zimmerman was not a police officer. The point in Adam's work is more specific to police officers who quit their professions, or at least thought about quitting their professions due to the negative environments they believe to be created by social media and the mainstream media.

These findings were amplified by Sing et al. (2019), Rook (2015), and Donovan and Klahm (2015), who found that not only did social and traditional media have a significantly negative impact on minority audiences' perceptions of the police, but so did popular entertainment media. Pyrooz et al. (2016) echoed these authors, determining that media representations of police use of force incidents dramatically increased antagonisms between law enforcement and minority communities. Pyrooz et al. further affirmed that these representations dramatically increased minority audiences' perceptions of racial bias in law enforcement, amplifying fear, mistrust, and dislike for law enforcement among the minority communities they serve.

The terminology of "Ferguson Effect" (Payrooz, 2016) is one of many different theoretical effects which has been labeled upon the police use of force phenomenon.

Before the Ferguson incident there was the Rodney King case which in itself generated an equally high level of intensity by the public to go beyond expression and enact violence (Graziano, 2019). Though what makes the two so different is that in the Ferguson case the use of force was proven through a thorough investigation to have been a justified act by the police officer, versus the Rodney King incident where the police conducted themselves inappropriately (Graziano, 2019). The differences between the two are significant enough, yet the perception of them in the media there are no differences (citation). It is this lack of perception by those in social media that is believed may have an impact upon minority criminal justice students in Oklahoma and their continuing a criminal justice degree.

Significantly, Graziano (2019) also examined societal perceptions of police use of force incidents as these are impacted both by various forms of media, including entertainment, news, and social media. However, the author did not narrow the research to minority audiences in general or to minority criminal justice students. Nevertheless, the Graziano provided an important point of comparison against the data I gathered and centered on students of color presently or formerly considering a criminal justice education and degree.

Effects of Media on Criminal Justice Career Choice

Barthe et al. (2013) examined the effects of both popular and digital media on university students' decisions to pursue criminal justice degrees. The authors found that television and social media both had a positive impact on students' decisions to study

criminal justice. However, this study was quite broad-based and did not target minority criminal justice students or media representations of police use of force incidents. However, the data derived from Barthe et al. study provided an important point of comparison with my study.

The Impact of Media on Adolescent Audiences

Because adolescence is the period in which many of the attitudes and behaviors that will shape the individual well into adulthood are formed, a significant body of literature exists to determine the impact of media exposure on teens' perceptions of law enforcement. Anderson and Jiang (2018) and Rook (2015) found that exposure to social media significantly increased negative perceptions of law enforcement by minority teenagers. Add summary and synthesis to fully develop the paragraph and connect to your completed study.

Threats to Law Enforcement

In an important study of the effects of language used in media representations of police use of force incidents, Gibbs (2019) found that when reports were couched in negative terminology, threats to law enforcement significantly increased. The study suggests that it is likely not what is reported but *how* events are reported that lead not only to negative perceptions of police but also to increasing violence against them. Again, however, these studies have not targeted minority criminal justice students in particular, a gap this proposed study seeks to bridge.

Though this study is to focus specifically on the impact which media portrayals of police use of force incidents has on minority criminal justice students in Oklahoma. The

belief is that not only do these portrayals have an impact on the motivations of the minority criminal justice student to complete their criminal justice studies, but also their perception of threats to police officers and the increased risks they might take by becoming police officers. It is conceivable that a minority criminal justice student can see through social media that there are people in their specific groups which express themselves beyond rational norms to desire harm be done upon the police, and this perception by the minority criminal justice student might be that if they continue upon their pursuits, they could be the target if that which they observe in the social media and be subject to harm. This may serve as a potential deterrent for them to complete their criminal justice studies, or it could be a motivator for them to become a subject of social change and push harder through their criminal justice studies, this is what the proposed dissertation study seeks to answer.

Influence of Media Consumption Type on Attitudes Toward Crime Punishment

Intravia (2019) recently conducted an important study examining the effect of media type on young adults' attitudes toward the punishment of crime. Intravia found, more specifically, the audiences who consumed both social and traditional media that was more punitive in nature tended to have stronger positive attitudes toward the punishment of crime. This effect was increased when the subject matter related to crimes that the audiences particularly feared. Though not relating specifically to the effects of media on audiences' perceptions of the police, this study is useful in demonstration how media consumption patterns both reflect and shape the audiences' perceptions of the criminal justice system and how it does and should behave.

The belief which drives this research is that the media and social media do have an impact on the perceptions of the general public and that the general public composition differs by demographics, most especially areas where higher populations of lower income minorities exist. The questions in this study are not so much what the media and social media has to say about police use of force incidents so much as what influence those portrayals have on minority criminal justice students. Choi (2019) examined the impact which media portrayals of the police have on college students, both criminal justice majors and non-criminal justice majors. However, the study did not describe the specific demographics of the students, nor obtain the raw opinion data which is proposed in this dissertation.

It is important to note that the proposed research study will not be based on an automatic assumption that the impact of social media on minority criminal justice students is wholly negative and as such will have a negative impact on the actions of the minority criminal justice students, such as leading to the abandonment of their academic studies in the field. The primary goal of the dissertation is to determine what, exactly, the effect(s) is/are, whether motivational or detrimental. The demographics of Oklahoma are many ways is different than the demographics of larger metropolitan areas, such as St. Louis, Missouri, or Chicago, Illinois, and as such a different result could occur if this study were made broader. Media portrayals of police use of force incidents might motivate more minority criminal justice students to pursue their degrees as a hope of social change, or perhaps just the opposite addressing such questions is what the researcher wishes to accomplish by conducting this research.

This study is intended to fill the gap in other research conducted as recent as 2019, conducted by Morrow, et al (2019), which was a quantitative study of 654 criminal justice students in two universities. The goal was to determine if the so-called Ferguson Effect had any impact on the motivations of the students to become police officers. Although similar in scope to this researcher's intent, the study was quantitative and did not articulate the demographic factors within their test group, nor did it deploy qualitative methods to explore any potential differences of opinion. This study, however, proposes to obtain the raw opinion data from minority criminal justice students, not just specific to the Ferguson Effect, but a general consensus of whether or not the traditional media and social media have any influence upon them to continue with their criminal justice studies.

To further explore the use of the hypothetical "Ferguson Effect" as a negative motivator in an academic study one will have to use the works of Nix and Pickett, (2017), This well designed study exposes the negative opinions of the general public in response to what was described by the researchers as hostile media.

A particular area of interest in the proposed study is whether the media impacts differs across genres and media. More specifically, the goal is to assess the effects of traditional versus social media on minority criminal justice student in Oklahoma. To reiterate what was already stated earlier, a principal focus is to assess whether media portrayals have a negative motivational impact on a minority criminal justice students, or do they make that student want to become an agent of social change? The researcher's goal is by conducting a completely qualitative study to obtain raw opinion data insights

can be obtained which might help foster an understanding of what it will take to turn a negative into a positive, if needed.

Interestingly, the scholarly work done by Morrow, et al., did not indicate any potential for conflict in the research. To that end, it was assumed that the quantitative nature of the study alleviated much of the potential of conflict. In a generic qualitative design, the researcher wants to know not only how the students perceive police use of force incidents, but how those portrayals by the media and social media make them feel, and how those feelings impact their decision making as criminal justice students. It is conceivable that a minority criminal justice student from Oklahoma might be more motivated than a criminal justice student in other areas to complete their studies and become a force of change in the criminal justice field, or just the opposite? This is what the researcher wants to find out by conducting a qualitative study.

Additionally, in the study conducted by Morrow, et al., gaps in the research design were created by the researchers' decision to not go further into the variable of social media, and the interpretation people on social media have of police use of force incidents. It is this gap which the researcher believes to be significant enough to potentially be an important variable in the proposed study. The proposed study will examine what social media outlets are more prominently used today by minority criminal justice students. Could it be streaming media such as YouTube? Snapchat? etc. Regardless of whether the topic is germane to just police use of force incidents, it is conceivable that there could be a need for social change which exposes disinformation

for what it is and harbor change for truth in the virtual world, though that is not the primary idea behind the proposed study.

In a study conducted by Sethuraju et al. (2019) the opinions of all demographics of criminal justice students regarding the issue of police misconduct were examined. However, the study falls short of determining what impact the perceived misconduct has upon the motivations of the minority criminal justice student to complete their criminal justice studies. Thus, this is another quantitative study which does not explore the raw opinion data which the proposed study intends to extensively explore. The Sethuraju et al. study encompassed all ethnicities of criminal justice students, not focusing on specific media, or minority criminal justice students; it most certainly falls short of explaining what minority criminal justice students from specific demographics might perceive, such as the Midwest, or specifically Oklahoma.

The researcher's decision to develop a study design quite distinct from some of the aforementioned researchers may be supported by the research of Allcott et al. (2019). This study finds that research outcomes are strongly impacted by variations in sample demographics and study localities and timeframes. Thus, the authors assert, what people think, what they believe, and how they behave in one area of population can be a complete opposite of that from another area.

The article by Allcott et al. (2019) focuses on how social media has a psychological impact on some groups of people in society to such a degree that it potentially alters their perceptions of a wide variety of topics. Though police use of force is not a specific variable of the study, the ideas people get from other people on social

media and how group-think can impact large groups of people on social media is of great interest in the Allcott et al. study. In addition, the proposed dissertation research will be conducted from the point of view that if a negative group-think scenario is playing out and becomes what is known in society today as viral, then social media may play a particularly potent role in minority students' perceptions of police use of force incidents and their ultimate decision to continue or terminate criminal justice (CJ) studies. The assumptions of the researcher is that viral media has as much potential to motivate a minority criminal justice student to be a factor of change by completing their studies, as not completing their studies, of which is the intent to discover in the proposed dissertation research.

The foundations of that which Allcott et al. (2019) have written could be applied to any research topics that involve the psychological effects of social media, and could also be applied to an idea of social change by using social media to motivate people to do better, and attempt to achieve better things in their lives by positive means. Although the "Broken Windows Theory" of Kelling and Wilson (1982) was at the time more about the psychological effects of disintegrating communities in the physical sense, it could be argued that there is as equal of a psychological broken windows theory that could come from the media and social media to such a degree that there might be an impact on children growing up exposed to these media projections, and that once those children begin going out into the world they could be influenced by the virtual environment they grew up in. Additionally, the belief is that the proposed dissertation study will expose that

the previously mentioned environment could have motivational value in their choices to pursue a criminal justice degree.

Cooper et al. (2019) also researched some of the same topics to be examined in the proposed dissertation, including the sociological impacts of society on the potential minority criminal justice student. However, the Cooper et al. study does not evaluate whether perceptions of police are the cause. The study, however, does examine public perceptions of academic failure of minors and the disengagement of minorities from academic studies but falls short of exploring social media or mainstream media as variables in this mixed-method research.

In line with these findings Esqueda et al. (2019) examined the perceptions which minority students have of the criminal justice system, and ethnic identity. The study, however, falls short of identifying if the media and social media are a significant influence, and what the motivational impacts on minority criminal justice might be. In fact, the study focuses more on ethnic comparisons of the criminal justice system rather than obtaining only the minority perceptions of the minority criminal justice students. However, the study is significant in that it explores of how perceptions of minority criminal justice students were influenced by their personal and academic environments. This is where the proposed dissertation research will expand upon by focusing on raw opinion data of what the minority criminal justice students perceive of police use of force incidents, and if any motivations to complete, or withdraw from a criminal justice program will result.

In a study by Rossler et al. (2019), similarities in African-American criminal justice students' perceptions of barriers to their interests to pursue a criminal justice career were identified. The study identified certain social strains in the students' environment which have at times appeared as barriers for them to complete their pursuits. Where the study falls short is how significant the environmental concerns were, and if the variables included media and social media factors. The proposed dissertation will focus on those gaps and the demographic question which has been numerously posed in this proposal of what potential differences might exist with minority criminal justice students from Oklahoma.

Most of the studies described in this proposed dissertation are related in many important ways to the desired direction of the research but are found wanting regarding design and/or research focus. This includes the focus on demographics of the students, the type and location of the schools themselves and the forms of media involved. Additionally, it is the belief of the researcher that some universities exacerbate the problem by supporting some of the biased narratives which are portrayed by the medias, therein giving justification to the minority criminal justice student to cultivate a potentially negative point of view of the criminal justice profession. Though that is not a focus of the proposed dissertation, it is a potential variable which could be exposed in appropriately worded study questions posed to the study participants.

Theoretical Frameworks

Theoretically, this study built off of Bandura's social cognitive theory (SCT,1977) as this theory facilitates the analysis of media as a significant modality of social learning and cognition. Deploying SCT as a means of viewing media as an instrument of social learning underscores the potential of media to both reify and to perpetrate social division, including divisions between law enforcement and minority communities (Capece, 2015). At the core of SCT is the nexus between cognition and behavior, the premise that individuals not only learn how to perceive the world around them through the influences of their social environment but also that these environmental cues and the perceptions to which they give rise then, in turn, shape, rationalize, and legitimize their behaviors (citation). In short, Bandura suggested that social learning, is the basis of both thought and behavior, the core of how one both understands one's world and acts in it.

The research of McGuire et al. (2016) supported my application of SCT to an understand the media's role in social learning. The authors argued that the influence of the media in shaping perception and behavior is as great as the influences of one's family, peer group, or local social environment. McGuire et al. asserted that such social learning is intensely powerful insofar as it involves a myriad of cognitive processes which inform both understanding and action, the most significant of which, according to SCT, are memory, motivation, and attention. Further, as the authors noted, SCT stipulates that these processes operate across three facets of agency: proxy agency, in which individuals influence their circumstances indirectly, through the actions of others; direct personal agency, in which an individual is capable of direct action, most often motivated by some form of outside stimulus: and collective agency which is achieved through coordinated as

well as interdependent efforts (Bandura, 2008). I sought to examine the influence of media on criminal justice students' perceptions and enactment of personal, proxy, and collective agency relative to their attitudes toward and relationships with law enforcement.

Khang et al. (2014) demonstrated that the influences of social media and Bandura's cognitive theory are linked as social media enables social learning processes on an exponential scale, with individual social media users absorbing, responding to, and learning from multiple social influencers. Bandura (year) posited that social learning occurs through a process of observation of and communication with social influencers. Such interactions then form the basis of cognition and perception, which shapes decision-making and subsequent action. Today's continual news cycle and social media communication means that the force of the media as a social learning instrument has been redoubled, exerting greater power than at any other time in human history (Milgram, n.d.). A significant feature of SCT is its emphasis on the role of social learning in shaping both the individual's sense of self and of his/her power to influence his/her world.

In addition to the application of SCT and SCCT, I drew on the work of Milgram. Milgram's social network theory depicts individuals as nodes and their relationships and interactions as ties which together form a complex, dynamic, mutually influential, and interdependent social network. Milgram's law (n.d.) suggests that technologies of networking are determined principally not by the individual actors (nodes) but by the relationships between them (ties). The nature and longevity of such tie's accounts for the rapid rise and fall of social networks (Milgram, n.d.). Within the context of the my study,

modern media and social media may be seen to constitute rapidly emerging, evolving, and expanding social networks (in Milgram's sense) which simultaneously define and are defined by the relationships/ties between individual actors. Because social networking media exponentially increases the number of "nodes" implicated in a social network, the complexity of the relational ties linking them is similarly magnified. Milgram's tenets suggest that, within the framework of the social network, subject selves constituting the system's individual "nodes" are not so much the product of agentic processes predicated upon the autonomous individual's desire, effort, and ability to respond to external stimuli and environmental/social circumstances, as described by SCT. Rather, subject selves derive from and are informed by the ties that connect them. Thus, these nodes are the product of interconnected and inter-dynamic relationships. If, as social network theory suggests, individual subject selves are the outcome of the network of affiliations or relationships that connect them, then the influence of modern social media is, as SCT will also predict, exponentially magnified, a function of the multiplicity of "nodes" to which the individual node/subject connects and is connected.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Possible Types and Sources of Data

For this study, I used nondirective, semistructured interviews of minority criminal justice students to gather students' perspectives on media representations of police use of force incidents. The purpose of these interviews was to measure the perceived impact of the media's representations of use of force incidents on minority students' decisions to pursue, continue, or abandon a criminal justice degree. Participants were selected using a snowball method for initial selection. I contacted criminal justice instructors or program directors in order to connect me with potential student participants from selected minority criminal justice students. The vetting process continued by using the previously established parameters commonly used in the snowball sampling method for the purposes of identification and suitability to participate in the study; specifically vetting was conducted to ensure that candidates self-identified as minority students in a criminal justice postsecondary criminal justice program. Selected participants identified as a racial or ethnic minority, specifically African American or Latino/a, and were either pursuing, considering, or had withdrawn without earning a degree in criminal justice within the last 3 months. Semistructured interviews were administered to chosen candidates. Data analysis were conducted principally through discourse analysis. Interviews were recorded and transcribed and notes regarding the subjects' demeanor and body language while under interview will be taken. Subjects' responses were linguistically and rhetorically parsed and analyzed to assess how students described their perspectives on the media and its impacts. This process of discourse analysis facilitated the identification and analysis of

the unconscious and unspoken influences revealed in the subjects' phraseology, word choice, articulation, and body language. The stronger influencer was the subjects' perspectives on media representations of police use-of-force incidents. The goal was to assess the impact of these representations on minority students' decisions to complete, or to abandon, their pursuit of a criminal justice degree. The study was modelled after Nix and Wolfe's (2015) analysis of the hypothetical "Ferguson effect" and its impact on minority communities and their relationships with law enforcement, and what that phenomenon has upon minority criminal justice students in Oklahoma.

Researcher's Role

The primary role of a qualitative researcher is to engage in such a manner as to draw the raw opinion data from the participants without compromising the integrity of the study (Daniel, 2018). The researcher presents information from phenomenon, which potentially comes from various range of cultural environments (Daniel, 2018). In my study, the information came from minority criminal justice students in Oklahoma.

A challenge I faced in the data collection process was to gain and maintain the trust of the study as I am a career law enforcement professional, in addition to a career academic mentor. Both professions could have caused participants to be concerned about my potential biases. It is the role of the researcher to provide the participants with assurances that no bias exists (Daniel, 2018). Add information on how potential bias was mitigated.

Participants

Participants were selected by snowballing, where criminal justice students were the primary point of referral of other students. To ensure saturation it was necessary to use criminal justice program directors to provide referrals of minority criminal justice students as potential participants to the researcher. Additionally, as a measure of redundancy, academic affairs specialists also were enlisted to help me recruit study participants. My contact information, such as phone number and email, was provided to potential participants. Informed consent was provided to all participants, and all personally identifiable information on any potential participant was kept confidential. Written permission from educational establishment would be obtained, but only if use of university staff or faculty became necessary in the recruitment of participants. The educational establishment was used only to locate participants, on a referral basis where African-American and Latino criminal justice students would be accepted by the researcher.

A total of 10 participants was selected. The participants selected were at least 18 years of age, self-identified as African American or Latino, and either had been or were participants in a collegiate level criminal justice program at the time of selection. The selection criteria included participants at different levels of academia, from first year, to fourth year of collegiate level attendance.

Research Design

The chosen research design of this study was a qualitative phenomenological method using a generic qualitative inquiry design. The goal of this design was to be able

to better obtain a clear understanding of the life experiences of the study participants who are regularly engaged in media and social media observances of police use of force incidents.

The phenomenological methodology was the appropriate choice for a study such as this one because it is a focus on many variables such as culture, observations, and life experiences of study participants who are of a specific group, in this case minority criminal justice students of a postsecondary level of education. (see Daniel, 2018)

Population, Setting and Sampling

The search, solicitation, and screening of participants was conducted in various locations across Oklahoma. Because the study involved minority criminal justice students of a collegiate level criminal justice program it was prudent to use the snowball method for selection of potential participants by using program directors, criminal justice instructors, and fellow criminal justice students. Flyers, business cards and selection questionnaires were provided to those persons who aided in the search for participants. Participants were sought until saturation was achieved.

A key consideration was that the interviews needed to be recorded and that any background noise had to be minimal in order to ensure quality recordings. Because of COVID-19 restrictions in place at the scheduled time, the interviews were conducted by video sessions, including Go To Meeting, Zoom, or Google Meet.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this qualitative study were semi-structured interviews designed to solicit specific responses from the participants. The interviews were designed

to solicit enough detail as to enlighten the researcher of any developing themes, a goal which proved successful. The idea of interviews between a researcher and the participant(s) is to develop a rapport and foster a relationship between them which will help further academic discussions that will aid in the development and understanding of the phenomenon which the researcher desires to expose in the study. The semistructured interviews assisted the researcher in being able to not only obtain the answers specific to the research, but to also allow for follow-on questions which helped identify unforeseen themes relevant to the phenomenon.

The semistructured interview questions (Appendix A) were tailored to the participants' academic and life experiences of how significant of an impact that media portrayals of police use of force incidents have on them, the minority criminal justice student. Therefore, open-ended questions were used to explore the topic with the intent of obtaining the raw opinion data of not only what the participant thought or felt, but what environmental concerns might also be significant to their beliefs of the topic. Video recordings of the interviews were used to capture the necessary details, but only with the participants' permissions after being assured that their identities and data would be protected.

Data Collection

The data collection process involved in the qualitative study included documented answers from interview questions, archived research files, and tape recordings of the interviews. That data constituted the core of the study, helping me to understand the answers and transfer those answers into viable raw opinion data. This process also

ensured the data in this qualitative study was original in nature and helpful to the concepts of the phenomenological study.

Considerable care was taken during this study to ensure participants' preferred environment, not only to record their responses, but also the participants' behaviors during the interview process. It was a paramount concern of the researcher that the participants were comfortable with the environment where it was easier for them to speak and provide more accurate answers to the questions of the researcher.

Initial Contact

As previously stated, the initial contact with the participants was done through a trusted third party, using a snowball method, where a trusted colleague of the participants' was the initial connection between the researcher and participants. This chosen method of initial contact has been perceived by many researchers as first and easiest way for a researcher to gain the trust of potential study participants (Jalca et al., 2019).

Interview Process

Upon receiving approval from the institutional review board (IRB) the researcher, used the snowball sampling method, and the participants were selected using a questionnaire to ensure that they fit the specific classifications of a desired participant, in this case the participants will be African American or Latino criminal justice students of a collegiate level criminal justice program. Upon successful vetting and being selected as a participant, the contact information of the researcher such as email and phone number were given to the participants along with an invitation to continue with the research.

Once that contact was made the researcher ascertained that the virtual video conference would be the safest and most comfortable interview strategy given the ongoing pandemic. A meeting date and time for the interview was established after some initial discussions to ensure that the participant understood the nature of the study, and that the participant felt reassured that the researcher and research would be unbiased, and that the participants' identity would not be divulged. The participants were also introduced to the coding system that was used as identifiers for the participants.

Interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis between the researcher and all of the participants over a 3 month period of time. The participants were asked to provide their life experiences as relative to the research study, where raw opinion data was what the researcher desired to obtain from the participant through conducting semistructured interviews where participants will be asked to speak openly about their experiences. The researcher also encouraged them to feel comfortable in speaking openly about any events they might have seen as germane to the topic without interruption from the researcher.

All interviews were digitally recorded and, upon completion of interviews, the researcher compensated the participants with an incentive payment as a reward for involvement in the study. All interviews were analyzed for a systematic meaning by reading, then rereading, comparing, and interpreting the data as needed to ensure accuracy of the data is achieved. The data were transcribed by use of a digital transcription device, and those transcriptions handled with the highest level of care, including with the recordings in a secured, locking safe which only the researcher had access to. Those transcriptions were done by the researcher using transcription software

to ensure minimal involvement of persons other than the researcher in the project.

However, the recordings were kept in case validation of the transcriptions might later be requested by any regulatory authority. No qualitative software were used for the analysis of the data as the desire of the researcher was to utilize the generic qualitative design as intended, to obtain raw opinion data which the researcher wanted to personally connect to through direct analysis.

Limitations, Challenges, and/or Barriers

While the use of semistructured interviews was a highly effective approach for the proposed study, there were several challenges which had to be guarded against if the credibility and dependability of the research were to be assured. Because the researcher was working alone and under heavy time constraints, the number of participants had to be limited to 10 students. Limiting the study size, however, ensured the data could be reasonably assessed with both the depth and rigor required. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledge that such small study sample makes it difficult to determine if the findings can be extrapolated to the general target population.

Another issue regarding this design method was the reality that the data were based largely on subject self-reporting. This could have led to false or misleading data due to conscious and unconscious inaccuracies in the subjects' interview responses (Tracy, 2019). For example, subjects might have felt reticent to be forthcoming about their perspectives and experiences in front of a Caucasian male police chief. This could have led them to withhold or downplay their experiences and their viewpoints, which

would misrepresent the data by suggesting that the link between media reports and audience perspectives is weaker than it truly is.

Another challenge with this approach was that subjects' memories may have been faulty. Subjects may intentionally or unintentionally have failed to disclose key issues and, in turn, may have compromised the integrity of the data. Because these subjects were self-reporting, they may not even have been aware that they may have been skewing their representations due to an unconscious desire to protect themselves, their families, or their communities.

As the sole researcher on this project, there were several factors that had to be guarded against as well. The foremost among these was vulnerability to observational and analytical bias. How one perceives and interprets the world is largely a function of one's own unique life experiences and or particularly idiosyncratic ways of thinking about and representing the world. My life experiences as a white male are likely to be far different than the life experiences of my subjects and, as such, the assumptions and perspectives I bring to bear are likely to be quite distinct as well. With regard to my own analytical work, it was incumbent upon me to engage in continuous self-monitoring and self-analysis, questioning how I observed, collected, and analyzed my data in order to tease out the underlying biases which may have led to a false interpretation of my subjects' self-reports. These issues were addressed across the study lifespan through careful processes of self-reflection.

Barriers relating to this research project included the extensive experiential barriers between me and my subjects. While the subjects may have been able to describe

with depth and resonance their perspectives and experiences, and while I assuredly sought to empathize with and understand my subjects' viewpoints, my vastly different life experiences undoubtedly could have been an ideological and experiential barrier. In addition, as I approached this research from the perspective of a long, successful, and dedicated career in law enforcement, my ability to understand a subject's sense of mistrust, hostility, or anger toward law enforcement may also have proved to be a significant barrier.

There were also some logistical barriers to the completion of this research as well. From a practical standpoint, the ability to access my subjects and to cultivate the proper environment for discussing such sensitive issues was a challenge. It was difficult to coordinate interview times and, especially, to carry out the interviews, ensuring enough time to explore these complex topics with the depth and sensitivity required.

The qualitative methods chosen here were also by no means perfect. However, they offer the best hope of identifying the impact of media representations of police use of force incidents on minority criminal justice students. Semistructured interviews and field observation, followed by discourse analysis of interview transcripts, were the best option for assessing minority criminal justice students' perspectives on the media and what effects the media has on these students. However, the small sample sizes and the vulnerability to representational errors and biases on the part of subjects and the researcher alike threatened the overall credibility and dependability of the study. Careful deliberation and continuous self-reflection were essential to overcoming these challenges (O'Sullivan et al., 2017).

To ensure credibility the best practices were to ensure the researcher used a successful qualitative research methodology, with a generic qualitative design (Amankwaa, 2016). To preserve the integrity of the study and resulting data, the researcher also had to become familiar with the online environment in which interviews were conducted. Interview subjects needed to be comfortable with the environment in which they were interviewed, and the interviewer needed to be aware of the environment where the interviewee came from.

Learning about the interviewees was another key aspect of credibility, ensuring that the study participants were well selected and interview questions and field notes were germane to the research. Another significant issue in the conduct of the proposed study was to ensure that the ethical guidelines of scientific research were not only followed by the researcher and participants but that these were carefully reviewed and consented to by all parties. This included the researcher's dissemination and explanation of study information sheets and individual permissions documents provided to the interviewee for signature affirmation (Amankwaa, 2016).

The development of a detailed research plan approved by the dissertation committee in adherence to established university guidelines helped to ensure that the data collection process followed the standards set by the educational institution, in this case Walden University (Amankwaa, 2016). To ensure transferability the researcher took care to ensure that research materials and other content were accurate, relevant, accessible, and secure. Further, the researcher assured all writing was done within the standards set

by the APA, and were clear, concise and appropriate for the highest standards of academic writing and research.

Discourse analysis based on written transcripts of the recorded interviews was then conducted. This was used to identify common themes and significant outliers in the process of conducting qualitative analysis on the data.

Research Coding

As in any research project coding is a fundamental expectation of a research study, or project. As such the data collection process was accomplished by using Microsoft Office software such as Word, and Excel. A coding system was employed using pseudonyms and codes to identify and categorize the participants, such as P for participant and a number to indicate which participant they are of the 10 selected participants. The coded information was collated with that data collected from the participant before being analyzed by the researcher to ensure that the data followed the form of a qualitative study, which is a fundamental foundation of any study to ensure that the data meets the elements of the study and provides conciseness and clarity.

Protection of Participants

All participants received information about the objectives of the research study, that information was provided in written and verbal form and clearly informed the participants that their involvement in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any reason being expected of them. The data being analyzed from the participant's responses was handled in such a manner as to provide the anonymity of the participants.

Assurances were provided to the participants all throughout the process to ensure that they understood that no harm would befall them for participating in the research study. Participants received written and verbal information regarding the objective and content of the study, in accordance with the standards set in the Belmont Report which in a sense was a litmus test for modern day research that relates to the ethical standards of research and the protection of research participants (Anabo et al., 2019)

Summary

Chapter 3 covered the methodology of the proposed dissertation research starting with an introduction to the proposed qualitative research study. Then there are details provided about the research design and structure which are used to outline the phenomenological research design for a generic qualitative design where the researcher will explore the phenomenon of African American and Latino/a criminal justice perceptions of media portrayals of police use of force incidents, and to gain a clear understanding of their lived experiences.

Chapter 4: Results

Research Setting

In order to reach the required number of individuals to ensure the reliability and validity of the study, recruitment flyers were provided to potential participants through third party individuals who served as a point of contact. The qualifications for participation in this study was that participants self-identify as African American and/or Latino and are currently members of a criminal justice program, or who had withdrawn from a criminal justice program within the last 3 months. In addition, qualified participants had to be engaged in media and social media discussions about police use of force incidents. The flyers gave all pertinent information of who was encouraged to participate in the study and guided them to a survey to voluntarily complete to determine if they were suited to participate in the study.

Numerous potential participants called or emailed me to inquire about the study. Candidates were then provided online access to a qualification survey in Google docs. From there, the most qualified participants (i.e. those who reported the highest levels of topic-related media engagement) were selected and contacted by me to set an acceptable time and location for the interviews to be done with each selected participant.

Demographics

Contact was made with 18 potential participants; two of them dropped from consideration when it was determined that they were not currently engaged in or recently withdrawn from a criminal justice program. Six potential participants were deselected because they were not participating in a postsecondary criminal justice program, but

rather a high school level criminal justice program. A total of 10 participants were selected from the participation pool of interested potential participants. The age range of the selected participants was between 18 and 25; seven identified as female, the other three identified as male.

Participant Selection

Once the required number of participants were recruited to obtain saturation, as outlined in the research plan, and selected for the study, I contacted the selected individuals and asked to confirm their willingness to continue with participation in the study. Once the confirmations were obtained and consent forms signed, dates and times were set up with each of those participants. Letters were sent out to those who were not selected, explaining that a sufficient pool of participants had been selected and that their willingness to participate was greatly appreciated.

Data Collection

In this qualitative study, I used the phenomenological approach to explore the students' perceptions of the media portrayal of police use of force incidents. One face-to-face interview was conducted; the remaining participants chose the option of interviewing online as part of the data collection process. The participants were provided interview questions based on their lived experiences, behaviors, and perceptions of media coverage of police use of force incidents.

As was anticipated, some participants appeared concerned that I was a law enforcement official, but became comfortable when assured that the role of the researcher

was separate from the professional role and that my profession would not impact the study or its participants in any way.

During the interview process, some of the participants' appeared to undergo some behavior changes regarding the research questions. The most common of these changes were pauses before responding to questions or changes in posture, voice, and some minor emotional overtones, especially after a particular question was asked.

All the participants' behavior was documented as they responded to the interview questions. Capturing and documenting this data were instrumental in the interview process and I used this data in the comparative analysis process. Though the nature of the study was primarily to focus on the perceptions of the participants, significant nonverbal and often unconscious cues served as indexes of the perceptions and the emotional responses of the participants. The most common of emotional responses to the questions was nonverbal in nature but due to the video recording, the body language of the participants were recorded. Those nonverbal responses suggested that the participant was at least in part uncomfortable with the nature of the questions when asked about police use of force and also with the amount of time which they spent engaged in media coverage of police use of force incidents.

Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and was video recorded, transcribed, and documented. Upon completion of each interview the recorded and transcribed data was entered in an Excel spreadsheet, properly coded for privacy and security purposes. Complete confidentiality was maintained throughout the collecting of

data by removing any potential participant identifiers before anyone was allowed access to it.

Data Analysis

I used Microsoft Office products such as Word and Excel software to organize, document, code, and analyze the interview data. The relative data regarding each participant's qualifications and experiences from the recruitment process were combined with each participant's interview responses, and those responses were then transferred into the Excel spreadsheet for qualitative analysis. Coding scheme processes learned during Walden residencies were deployed which would allow the data to be categorized and anonymized for each participant. That data was sorted by age, race, gender and level of education and then analyzed using the open and selective coding process, which was a process to identify what was sought, to determine the limitations of instances, and to compile the data into a single file.

During data collection, specific data was selected that were part of the phenomenon and evaluated as relevant data to answer the RQs. Any data that was selected were appropriately coded to allow for complete and thorough analysis of every facet of the results. Also, the codes were defined and labeled for each relevant feature of the data. The codes were documented and then entered an Excel worksheet to record and organize the codes, analyze the data, and provide summary information and file locations.

Once the data had been coded, categorized, and summarized, subject checking was conducted with the participants. This process permitted the participants to confirm

that their collected information was captured accurately. Furthermore, this follow-up process allowed the participants to make changes, as necessary.

Question Analysis

As described above, once the data were collected from participant interviews, they were transcribed and entered on Excel spreadsheets for analysis. The data analysis resulted in specific details the participants provided on the impacts of media representations of police use of force incidents and their own decisions to abandon or to remain in a postsecondary criminal justice program. The two RQs addressed in this study were as follows:

RQ1: What influence does the traditional media's representation of police use of force incidents have on Oklahoma minority criminal justice students' decision to pursue a criminal justice degree?

RQ2: What influence does social media's representation of police use of force incidents have on Oklahoma minority criminal justice students' decision to pursue a criminal justice degree?

The responses of the 10 participants interviewed are presented as answers to the preceding interview questions.

Research Question 1

Data collected from the participants for this research question were from answers to the Interview Questions 1 through 3. In Interview Question 1, the participants were asked, "What influence does the traditional media's representation of police use of force

incidents have on Oklahoma minority criminal justice students' decision to pursue a criminal justice degree?"

Table 1

Participants	A Students Reported Significant Influence	B Students Reported No Significant Influence	C Why?
Current CJ Students	4	3	Students influenced said they spend significant time on watching traditional media. Traditional media has negative impact on their perception of police because of validity.
Former CJ Students	3		Former students advised that they spend significant time on media and social media, but more time on social media. Former CJ students advised traditional media more trustworthy than social media.

Most of the students and former students advised that they frequently observed social media and traditional media coverage of police use of force incidents, but had not given much consideration to the perception of police use of force incidents until they

began viewing comments of friends and family on the media and social media posts. At this point, it was determined through many of their self-reflections that the social media and media portrayals of police use of force incidents had an emotional impact on them. But there was no evidence to support the hypothesis that these emotional impacts had a determinative effect on their pursuit of a CJ degree. However, some former CJ students stated that their perceptions of police use of force incidents had some influence in their decision to leave their CJ programs. The most significant influence was when students observed a friend or family member who had a negative perception of a police use of force incident. After witnessing friend or family responses, the participants reported that they gave more consideration to the social media or media coverage of that specific incident.

All the former criminal justice students advised that they left the program to pursue other academic pursuits due to their perception of police use of force incidents which they observed on media and social media. Additionally, the former students also reported that the influence became more significant after they observed or witnessed family or friends who were speaking negatively about the police use of force incident which they observed on social media and media outlets. Significantly, the former students were all in their first year of study. Also, those former students advised that they considered staying engaged in the field, but to pursue studies and work in an area of criminal justice besides that of uniformed police work.

Research Question 2

Data collected from the participants for this research question were from answers to the Interview Questions 1 through 3. In Interview Question 2, the participants were asked, “What influence does the traditional media’s representation of police use of force incidents have on Oklahoma minority criminal justice students’ decision to pursue a criminal justice degree?” These questions were designed to assess the participants’ level of engagement with traditional and social media, including the frequency with which they read about or discussed police use of force incidents on these platforms.

A common theme among many of the participants was that they gave much less credibility to social media than they did the traditional media. Nearly all participants agreed that the negativity towards police was more significant in social media formats and that often came in the form of misinformation. Of the current criminal justice students, the majority of the students indicated that social media which involved relatives and friends had more of an impact on them than did the social media activities of strangers, passing acquaintances, or persons whom they were only friends with on social media and not in real life.

The responses of former criminal justice students indicated that, although they did not trust social media, they were more active on social media than the majority of those who were currently engaged in a criminal justice program. It was discovered that of the former criminal justice students nearly 50% of them had negative opinions of police which they felt they developed from their interactions on social media, but that they were still motivated to pursue some sort of degree which would keep them in an area of public

service. This suggests an important avenue for future research in the effort to understand how these former criminal justice students channel their professional goals, pursuits, and ambitions.

Table 2: Summary of Participant Responses to Q2

Participants	A Students Reported Significant Influence	B Students Reported No Significant Influence	C Why?
Current CJ Students	3	4	<p>Students influenced said they daily they spent time on traditional media.</p> <p>Traditional media has less negative impact on their perception of police use of force.</p> <p>All participants said they believed local news stations were more reliable than cable news networks like CNN, or Fox.</p>
Former CJ Students	1	2	<p>Former students advised that they spend significant time daily on traditional media.</p> <p>Traditional media has less of an impact on their perceptions of use of force.</p>

When all of the participants spoke on the topic of specific incidents of police use of force and where they came away with the more negative information about police, they said that social media was the predominant source of the negative information. All of them chose the most recent police use of force incident which involved George Floyd, which they heavily followed Facebook, as having a particularly significant influence on them.

When specifically asked who it was that published the specific incident the participants did not remember exactly who, but only that they took the information from Facebook. Also, notably, the participant responses indicated a slight pattern as it relates to demographics. The Latino criminal justice students indicated that they spent more time per day on social media, and that what they have witnessed on social media had more of an influence on them to not continue with their criminal justice degree. A recommendation for future research would be to determine if there is a reduction in the recruiting of African American and Latinos by police agencies as a result of the media coverage of these incidents.

Breakdown of Research Questions and Responses

Research Question 1

What influence does the traditional media's representation of police use of force incidents have on Oklahoma minority criminal justice students' decision to pursue a criminal justice degree?

1. How do you define police use of force in your own words?

The findings for this research question are presented below:

1. That participants gave more credibility to traditional media in relation to police use of force incidents.
2. The majority of participant perceptions traditional media sources from local news stations in OKC and Tulsa were more trustworthy than cable news media like CNN, or Fox News.
3. Over half (6 out of 10) participants believed that police have abused their authority as it related to use of force they perceived from coverage in traditional media.
4. Most of the participants disclosed that traditional media coverage did not have as much of an emotional impact on them as other media sources.
5. Over half of the participants were adamant that police unjustifiably use deadly force more frequently on African-American and Latin/ex suspects. This disclosure was not part of the research questions but was felt to be an important piece of data to support the research as it supports the premise of why they decided to proceed in or withdraw from their degree programs.
6. Some of the participants claimed that they left their criminal justice studies because of the negative perceptions of police from traditional media coverage of police use of force.
7. One participant who was still in his criminal justice studies and was engaged in a uniformed police officer job disclosed that he did not believe that police misconduct was as prevalent as portrayed in either form of media and was undeterred by either of them.

8. Of the 10 participants at least six of them disclosed that their close family and friends who they interacted with on social media had unfavorable views of the police and that those views had an emotional impact on them. This certainly would support the social theory chosen for this study.

Research Question 2

What influence does the social media's representation of police use of force incidents have on Oklahoma minority criminal justice students' decision to pursue a criminal justice degree?

The findings for this research question are presented below:

1. All the participants indicated that they used Facebook and Snapchat as their primary sources of social media interaction.
2. Most of the participants (7 out of 10) advised that they did not trust social media as a source of information over traditional media.
3. All the participants disclosed that social media has more of an emotional impact on them as it relates to police use of force incidents.
4. Fifty percent of the participants believed the social media coverage of police use of force incidents had an impact on their perceptions of police, and police use of force.
5. When asked about their motivations to continue their criminal justice pursuits only three out of ten participants advised that would remain engaged in police work. Three of the participants advised they would not return to criminal justice studies, and four out of ten advised they would continue with their studies but

would avoid uniformed police work in response to what they witnessed on social media as it relates to police use of force incidents.

6. All the participants pointed to the police use of force incident against George Floyd as the most significant recent incident which they could say had an impact on them as based on social media coverage and discussion.

7. Of the three participants who advised they would not return to criminal justice studies, all said social media had a significant impact on their perceptions of the police, though they also admitted that they did not trust social media as much as traditional media due to the negativity and untrustworthiness of social media.

To summarize this section, which focused on the influence that traditional media representations of police use of force incidents have upon African American and Latino/a criminal justice students to decide on whether or not to continue with a criminal justice degree. There did not appear to be as much of an influence from traditional media, though all the participants agreed that traditional media sources were more reliable as it relates to accurate portrayals of police use of force, and those portrayals were less biased than that of social media sources. Additionally, the perception of the participants of traditional media overall was more positive than their perceptions of social media, not only from aspect of negative perception but also from the aspect of biasness.

Research Question 2 focused on the influence that social media representations of police use of force incidents have on African-American and Latino criminal justice students to decide on whether or not to continue with a criminal justice degree. Unlike traditional media, most of the participants indicated their comprehension that social

media is less reliable for valid information, and that the perceptions of the participants of police use of force incidents on social media such as Facebook were more negative and more likely to influence their decisions on whether or not to continue their pursuits of a criminal justice degree.

Interview Questions and Responses

Interview Questions 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 were specific to traditional media sources. Significantly, all participants indicated that they gave more credibility to traditional media sources which were local, such as News 9 Oklahoma City, or Channel 6 News in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Also of note is the fact that eight of the 10 participants indicated that they placed little trust in cable news networks like Fox News, or CNN. Further, the participants indicated they believed these sources to be lacking in honesty when covering police use of force incidents. This is a stark contrast to the participant perceptions of social media coverage of police use of force incidents, which the participants indicated being even less trustworthy due to what many of them described as overwhelming negativity.

Interview Questions 3, 6, 9 and 11 were specific to social media sources. All participants indicated that they were more engaged in social media than traditional media by nearly a 1 to 5 ratio. Participants reported engaging with traditional media once a day on average, whereas the participants reported engaging with social media 4 to 5 times a day on average. The most used social media source by all the students was Facebook, with Snapchat being a close second, then Tik-Tok being third on the list. Although all participants admitted to being engaged on social media more frequently, all ten of them

openly disclosed that they were aware of the extremely negative environment of social media, particularly in relation to the law enforcement in general.

Table 3

Participant Views of Media Credibility

Participants	Traditional Media	Social Media	
Current CJ Students	6	1	<p>Of the social media the most common used was Facebook and Snapchat. Though perceptions were that social media was more negative than traditional media</p> <p>One CJ student believed that social media sources were more reliable than traditional media sources.</p>
Former CJ Students	3	0	<p>All the former CJ students believed that traditional media was more reliable than social media.</p> <p>All the former CJ students believed that social media was too negative and not trustworthy.</p>

Table 4

Frequency of Traditional Media Use

Participants	1-2 Time Per Day	3-4 Times Per Day	5+ Times Per Day
Current CJ Students	1	6	
Former CJ Students	1	2	

Table 5

Frequency of Social Media Use

Participants	1-2 Times Per Day	3-4 Times Per Day	5+ Times Per Day
Current CJ Students		2	5
Former CJ Students		1	2

Of the ten participants involved in the study, only four of them decided to remain engaged in their criminal justice programs. The others decided to change the directions of their academic pursuits to a different program, three of them recently dropping out of post-secondary education altogether and unsure if they would return. The participants who withdrew from criminal justice studies to pursue other academic endeavors all went into areas, such as law or social work of some sort. The three participants who remained engaged in their criminal justice programs are currently working in the criminal justice field, one of them in uniformed police services, the other two in the correctional systems.

*Table 6:**Engagement in Criminal Justice Studies*

Participants	Stayed Within CJ	Left CJ Studies	Why?
Current CJ Students	4	3	Of the participants which remained in the criminal justice programs, 3 of them are working in the CJ field. Those that left the CJ programs all pursued some other social type of work, or the legal field.
Former CJ Students		3	Of the former CJ students who left college all together, undetermined if they were going to return. All former CJ student disclosed safety as one of the primary concerns for leaving.

Of those who left criminal justice studies the three which left post-secondary studies altogether were within their first year of studies; all the other participants were third- or fourth-year students. Two of the participants were still in their studies and projected that they would go beyond their Bachelor studies in hopes of completing their Master's level academic pursuits. Three participants disclosed that they considered dropping from their studies due to concerns for their safety when it appeared to them that the hazards of a criminal justice career were increasing, yet another potential gap in research which could potentially explored.

Emerging Themes

All participants dedicated a certain amount of time per day to both traditional and social media and gave attention to their coverage of police use of force incidents. Three of the participants advised they gave heavier attention to social media coverage of police use of force incidents, while the other seven advised that they gave no more attention to social media coverage of specific police use of force incidents than they gave to traditional media coverage. All of the participants advised that if they saw a police use of force incident on local news, they would then go to social media to further explore responses on social media. Some of them advised they would pay closer attention to the responses from people social media who they were close to such as families and friends.

Subtheme: Perceptions and Decisions

Of the 10 participants, nearly all of them agree that social media is less trustworthy than traditional media and yet according to their statements they gave enough credibility to social media for social media's coverage of police use of force incidents to have an impact on their perceptions, to such a degree as to at least develop negative thoughts of the police, and that negative perceptions had something to do with their decisions in whether or not to continue with their criminal justice degrees. Three participants said perception was the main reason they had withdrawn from their studies, at least for now.

Nearly all those students who decided to part from a criminal justice program or their choice to be in the uniformed police services reported a higher frequency of social media use. They also indicated that their decisions about their criminal justice degrees

might not be permanent, but at this point safety concerns given public opinion of the police and the demographics of the area which most of them live strongly influenced their current decision. The three who withdrew from their criminal justice programs are still undecided about returning but advised that their desires to remain engaged still existed.

Interview Excerpts

The following are some interview excerpts from the participants in this study that were collected, recorded, and transcribed:

Interviewee P1, Latina, Female, Former CJ Student

This participant was a 20-year-old Latina formal criminal justice student who was a police explorer during high school before joining a post-secondary criminal justice program. She had recently halted her pursuits of a criminal justice degree, stating, “I just have concerns for my safety at this time due to everything that is going on”. The participant alluded to a few concerns of being a police officer at this moment in time but did not rule out the possibility of pursuing a degree in another closely related field such as social work. At this time P1 is not engaged in any post-secondary education after dropping out of a criminal justice program.

P1 frequently alluded to her perceptions of the police as a child of being admirable, honorable and ethical but disclosed that her perceptions of police at an older age began to change not so much due to direct interaction with the police, rather than as a direct collation to incidents she had seen and heard from friends, and family, either directly, or indirectly on social media. When seeing something on social media and then seeing, or hearing the traditional media coverage of the incident which supported social

media in the slightest, she found that there was a more negative outlook towards her pursuits to be a police officer, and then questioned whether to continue with a criminal justice degree.

Interviewee P2, African-American, Male, Near Graduate Criminal Justice Student

P2 was a 27-year-old African-American male who stated, “I felt like this is what I should be doing to make things better for my community”. This participant is currently serving in a law enforcement career but did not disclose which agency. His intent was to complete his Bachelor studies and move forward with his master’s studies at his earliest opportunity. Though concerns were raised about media and social media portrayals of police use of force, this participant believed that the negativity of the media motivates him to continue in his advancement towards the next level of academia. P2 frequently indicated that he does not feel that traditional and social media covered police use of force incidents fairly and that he believes police misconduct is not as widespread as portrayed in those media.

P2 disclosed that his decision to stay the course in a degree program was not always unchallenged emotionally. That at many times during his pursuits he began to reflect upon his decision to continue with his degree program, directly or indirectly because of the negativity he witnessed from friends and family about a police career. The most common he found those negative insights was on Facebook, the chosen platform for him. It was Facebook which P2 advised was the most frequently used for information, over that of traditional media. And that credibility would not be given to portrayals by Facebook until he sought more information on traditional media sources, or in some cases

P2 advised he would seek out others, like a mentor in law enforcement, or academia, and obtain their feelings about incidents which might be called into question. Interestingly, the most significant event mentioned by P2 was the George Floyd event which at first P2 felt strongly that wrongdoing by the police was not as clear as being portrayed, but felt an affirmation was needed from a separate and direct source different than that of traditional and social media.

Interviewee P3, African-American, Male, Current Criminal Justice Student

P3 was a 29-year-old African -American male who works in the juvenile justice system and current criminal justice student stated, “I don’t agree with what some police do but I don’t believe most of what I see and hear in the media”. When asked about his thoughts on motivations to continue with the studies this participant said, “I have a choice to be part of the problem, or the solution, I chose the solution.” This participant is looking at completing a master’s degree in criminal justice studies and has not stated if he would stay in the juvenile justice system or attempt to pursue a uniformed police position.

Similar to P2, this participant felt that there were times where he reevaluated his choice to remain in a program, but unlike P2, there was enough of a negative impact from the various media sources to create doubt, but that seeking information from other sources to reaffirm, or reject a narrative was inherently the rational course of action. P3 works in a criminal justice job at this time but has thus far avoided uniformed police work based upon his believe at this time that it was not where he could make the “biggest difference”, but instead working in the juvenile justice system was where he could be a well needed part of change which he saw needed to be made. When asked if he felt those

perceived changes were taken from traditional, or social media, he disclosed that it was from both, but social media more than traditional media.

Interviewee P4, Female, African-American, Former Criminal Justice Student

P4 is a 27-year-old African-American female who left a criminal justice program for personal reasons, but stated, “I just don’t know if I want to continue with a criminal justice career with everything going on right now.” P4 stated she was disturbed by some of the police use of force incidents she has witnessed in the traditional and social media even though she does not give much credibility to those medias. She also went on to say, “I feel that that police targets blacks more than whites and something needs to change.” She further stated that at this time she was unsure if she would continue with a criminal justice degree but is thinking about a social work degree.

Interviewee P5, Latina, Female, First Year Criminal Justice Student On Hold

P5 is a 20-year-old Latino female criminal justice student who stated, “I’m not sure I want to continue my degree right now, but I know for sure I don’t want to be a police officer.” P5 expressed she felt like the environment at this time was too much of a safety risk for her and that what she witnesses in the traditional and social media only reinforces to her that social change is necessary because she felt, “The public don’t trust the police.” Notably, P5 also stated that she gave more credibility to traditional media over social media, and that social media, quote, “Is nothing but negative.”

P5 disclosed that she has only had a few contacts with police and that she came away from each contact with neither a positive nor negative outlook of police. But that her friends and family have had direct contact with the police and those contacts were

more negative than positive. That she felt that according to her friends and family the police were harassing them for no reason. A developing theme in this interview like the others is that this participant lives in the proximity to other participants who have repeated the same sentiment about police.

Interviewee P6, Female, African-American. Current CJ Student

P6 is a 22 year old female who stated, “I feel bad when I see stuff like George Floyd on television, it makes me mad” P6 also stated he felt that social media coverage of incidents like George Floyd were so much more negative and less clear. P6 stated that the choice to continue with a criminal justice degree was to stay in a program but to look at other professions in criminal justice and avoid working as a peace officer at this time, citing safety concerns as one of the reasons by saying, “People are mad right now and being a cop isn’t safe.” Though not asked in the interview P6 offered information that she planned on working in the probation or juvenile systems of criminal justice.

P6 has made it abundantly clear that uniformed police work is not the direction she wants to go but that she has police friends who she believes to be the example of police which she likes to see, and admittedly stated that she has never witnessed first hand any actions of a police officer which she felt was unjustified. That all negative perceptions she has she has either heard from friends and family, or from what she has observed on the various media sources.

Interviewee P7, Male, African-American, Former CJ Student

P7 is a 21 year old African-American male, who stated, “I just don’t like the direction this country is going and the hate people have for the police, so I wanted to do

something different” P7 further stated that leaving a criminal justice program had more to do with friends and family perceptions of police than his own, but that with the amount of negative feelings towards police he felt that being a police officer right now would be too dangerous and said that he does not know if he will go back to a criminal justice program anytime soon. However, during the interview questions P7 only referred to safety the one time, that quote, “The people I’m around the most don’t like the police and try to avoid them”.

P7 disclosed that each and every time he had contact with the police that the encounter was cordial and uneventful and yet the negative perception still existed to such a degree as to deter this participant from continuing with the pursuit of a degree in the field of criminal justice. Now this participant is seeking a degree in gaming development. Leaving to assumption that he would not consider returning to criminal justice studies.

Interviewee P8, Male, African-American, Former CJ Student

P8 is a 21 year old African-American male left the CJ program during his first year criminal justice student, stating, “I was wanting to be a cop but as I saw things I didn’t see when younger and saw stuff I didn’t see before I decided I didn’t want to continue with my degree at this time.: He noted that a lot of friends and family he speaks to on social media do not support his decision to pursue a criminal justice degree, or a job as a police officer. P8 stated he was concerned about his safety being in a community where so many people in his neighborhood dislike the police.

P8 disclosed that he has had direct contact with the police since leaving criminal justice studies and that his opinion of the police has diminished some, but still he

respected the job of the police as he stated was a difficult job which takes someone special to do the job, and he felt that he was not one of those people given the current public opinion of the police.

Interviewee P9, Female, African-American, Former CJ Student

P9 was nearly a graduate from an Associate's Degree criminal justice program who said, 'I wanted to be a police officer as a kid and liked studying to become a police officer but after seeing how my friends felt about cops after a shooting here in Tulsa I began to change my mind.' After leaving the criminal justice program P9 decided to pursue an education in criminal law and hopefully become a criminal defense attorney someday. P9 also remembered, "The initial feeling was frustration, I know not all cops are bad but that isn't how it seems in the media." She further stated she felt anxiety when talking about police incidents because she did not always agree with what others were saying, some of those whom she had great respect for.

P9 further said, "I believe that police do profile blacks and that as a result there are more blacks being confronted by police and that many of those confrontations go bad for blacks". It is this perception which the study hopes to uncover by determining if that perception is because of traditional media and social media, or if there is actually a developing phenomenon where police do in fact seek out African-Americans more than others. Statistical data research according to P9 was provided in her studies which conflicts with her beliefs and yet there is potential to support why she continues to follow that belief.

Interviewee P10, Female, African-American, Current CJ Student

P10 is a 25 year old African-American criminal justice student who attended an Associates program at a local college, graduated and is currently attending a Bachelors program and stated, “I just know that all these police incidents I see are not the standard for all police, but it still has an effect on me when I see things I know through my training that police officers do wrong”. P10 went on to describe that she did not believe there was an increase of incidents between police and blacks but that she felt that media coverage is more prevalent today and makes it appear as more incidents are occurring. P10 said that staying in a criminal justice program was a choice she did not make lightly but decided that she did not want to give up. She did, however, state she would probably find something else to do with her degree besides police work. P10 stated her morale went down after recent incidents like George Floyd and listening to her friends and family’s opinions of the police on social media.

P10 made it clear that distrust in the media was the reason that she conducted research to gather information, and that the information gathered painted a picture that police officers who do not follow their training make it increasingly harder on those police who follow procedures. And that she believed that though the officers actions like that in the George Floyd case were wrong, she did not feel that the actions were racially motivated as is what she believed was the portrayals of traditional and social medias.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was an important factor in the study. After full disclosure and transparency by the researcher about the purpose of the study, I was able to gain the trust

of the participants by explaining the purpose of the study from the very beginning of the interview process. Once the participants contacted me, I was able to give them detailed information about the study, explained to them how important their opinions were, and answered all their questions before, during and after the interview process. I followed up with the participants by e-mails and phone calls to those who provided a phone number and solicited any questions which they might have about the study. I remained actively engaged with the participants throughout the entire process and feel I succeeded in forging a respectful relationship with each of them, some of whom have now connected with me on social media, and have called my cell phone. I established a trusting relationship with the participants by assuring them that their discussions with me were strictly private and their information would be protected at all costs. Once their confidentiality was assured, they became open with me to the point that all questions were answered to not only my satisfaction, but their satisfaction as well.

Credibility

It was believed that due to my position in law enforcement, I would struggle to establish credibility with the participants, but once I described the purpose of the study and the benefits and purposes of social change, I was able to establish credibility with the participants. Further discussions about integrity and clarity of the research intent I believed earned me even more credibility with all the participants. My knowledge and experience of the topics of the study, and of police use of force, provided additional credibility once I was able to reassure the participants that I was not taking a position for or against the police, or against their opinions of the police. However, the most

significant action by me to provide credibility was to listen to them intently and answer their questions clearly.

Additionally, I was able to establish credibility with the participants regarding sharing of information and engaging and listening to their life experiences. My willingness to meet the participants at their place of choice, or to show my face on the monitor added some level of credibility to me and the study. Pratt et al. (2020) stated that the key to maintaining trustworthiness during a qualitative study was to establish a rapport with participants by establishing true transparency of not only the research study, but of the researcher as well. Allowing the participants, the opportunity to review their transcripts also helped to establish credibility even though none of the participants have asked to do so.

Transferability

Because the present study was qualitative, it provided me as the researcher with an ability to compare the data of other similar qualitative studies to not only assess the form of the studies, but also to evaluate their data, which would help provide a better understanding of public perception of police, and if any developing phenomenon might exist to aid this research study during the execution of the study. According to Daniel (2019), transferability is key to a successful study, and that during the transferability phase, it is imperative that the data and analysis has an adequate amount of synergy. Moving data and the analysis from a similar study and deploying it in this study not only aided in the establishment of a solid research foundation, but also assisted in the form and flow of this study. In this study I provided enough information so that those who wish to

review it may do so in such a way as to understand not only the intent of the study but also the data and its implications for their own research.

Dependability

To ensure the dependability of the study, it became necessary to constantly evaluate and remain highly self-reflexive regarding the processes through which the raw data is collected, documented, archived, coded, analyzed, and applied. Once the study is completed the litmus test is whether other researchers can read the study and come to the same conclusions as those I came to during this study. All elements of the study were captured accurately and as result of the data there was little to no changes needed to the research. The foundations of the study, and all information obtained was validated, and it was evident that some of the participants had a very emotional response to the topic at hand. Such emotional responses are important to the research but hard to put into the words that would capture the participants' intent. What a participant says can be recorded, but the body language and mannerisms are not as easy to capture and reflect in writing.

Confirmability

As I continued through the study there were no changes needed in the development of the study. Although there was a desire for me to make changes to reflect some of the emotional responses, no changes were made due to time constraints involved and some delays which developed during the proposal phase of the research, and the national pandemic which mandated that person to person interviews might be too risky for the participants. Frequent reviews of all notes, recordings and transcriptions were

done to ensure that all information obtained during this study was clear, concise, and truthful to not only the words of the participants, but the meaning and intent of the study itself.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

In a qualitative phenomenological study, it is the desire of the researcher to gauge not only what the participants say, the raw opinion data, but also how they respond to specific things in society (Daniel, 2018). In this study, I wanted to determine what impact or influence traditional media and social media portrayals of police use of force incidents may have on African American and Latino criminal justice students. The study revealed that there is a potential for the aforementioned medias to have an emotional impact on the participants. The emotional responses did in fact influence some of the participants' decisions on whether or not to continue with their criminal justice degree. In the research study, some aspects I had not considered began to develop which need to be considered. One such aspect of the study was the revelation that concerns over personal safety had as much influence the negative connotation of police use of force incidents on the decisions of former criminal justice students to withdrawing from their programs.

Prior to the increased coverage of traditional media and social media, the coverage of police use of force incidents was predominantly only a local issue which gained little or no exposure. The advent of the various medias has increased visibility police use of force, which serves to inflame audience perceptions. Although statistics showed a decrease of police use of force incidents leading into 2014, it is after the Michael Brown shooting and subsequent rioting which an increase in police use of force seems to have steadily increased according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2018). This statistic includes nonlethal encounters and lethal encounters not categorized by specific

event which may include incidents of civil unrest and police use of force which is relative to those events which are also prominently exposed by the various mentioned media sources.

Interpretations of Findings

Several interpretations were can be drawn from the data collected in this study. They are listed with each RQ.

Research Question 1

RQ1: What influence does the traditional media's representation of police use of force incidents have on Oklahoma minority criminal justice students' decision to pursue a criminal justice degree?

The findings revealed that most of participants had a clear understanding of what traditional media was and that with the exception of one participant the general assessment was that local news media was more trustworthy in regards to their coverage of police use of force incidents. The perceptions were shaped by the nature of participants' engagement in traditional media and how frequently they sought out traditional media for information related to police use of force incidents.

Some themes began to emerge during the collection of data and analysis phase of the study which was germane to the research and supports some ideas for continued research to address the gaps of this study. One such theme was that the participants' desires were not so much to discontinue their criminal justice programs altogether. Numerous subjects indicated that they may, in fact, only pause their pursuit of a criminal justice degree or career in law enforcement until this period of social unrest and potential

aggressiveness against the police somewhat abates. This theme supports the premise of the research question but also lends to the potential explanation to what other participants might have been thinking but did not disclose at the time of the interviews.

Trust and loyalty are some of the most important traits a community must have with their acceptance of traditional media (Nix & Pickett, 2017). However, all participants disclosed that traditional media was only partially trustworthy as it relates to various topics but most certainly police use of force incidents. Local news media was said by the participants to be more trustworthy than cable news networks like CNN or Fox News. The participants were almost evenly split demographically, where half of the students were from the Tulsa metro area, and others from the Oklahoma City metro area, and all from inner-city neighborhoods. The two areas having different news media channels which the participants claimed to watch at least once per day, if not more, depending on current events.

One theme that emerged fairly consistently was that local law enforcement engagement with the community was not adequately covered by the local media and that the participants would then trend towards social media for more information regarding any news related matters, especially incidents involving police use of force. However, the participants also claimed that if they saw something on social media relative to police use of force incidents they would go to traditional media for more trustworthy coverage of the incident. The theoretical framework, Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, chosen for this study was supportive to the research and to the findings of the research Bandura stated, "Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling

from others” (np.) Though traditional media of that time was significantly different, it does warrant consideration of how much impact modern day media technology might have on this theory.

In support of Bandura’s theory, Choi (2019) argued that the differential thought between the various demographics of criminal justice students was directly impacted by media and social media. During my research there were clear developing themes that the criminal justice students similarly gave little credit to the various medias and yet the medias did have an impact on their perceptions. Although the study by Choi was not directly connected to police use of force, it was directly connected to the media portrayals of the police in general and how those perceptions differed from criminal justice students and noncriminal justice students. It was found that criminal justice students were swayed by the media coverage but not nearly as much as noncriminal justice students. It is research like this which lends support to the ideas behind this study and that there is a developing theme that the various medias have some immediate impact which could lead to what some call a ripple effect in society (Fong et al., 2019). The same phenomenon could be said to exist in relation to police perceptions, and the potential for some groups in society who could use those medias to sew discourse against the government, and government employees, or police in general. Although these are gaps in this research, they are still compounding variables within this research, that of what impact the medias have on society, even if society holds little value in the validity of the medias.

The findings provided insight to not only how much less of an impact traditional media had on the participants, but that traditional media, though not used as much for

information, was more accepted for accuracy than social media sources. It could be that as criminal justice students the participants were given some insight into the need for research and what was acceptable sources of information, something not asked during the interviews but that might provide important insights and could be considered for future research.

In Bandura's (1977) social learning theory there is the triangle of influence is like that of Lockard's (year) theory of transference. Everything in the triangle is influenced by the other parts, but most specifically the environment, which is key to Bandura's theory. How these influences have an impact on people is key to the belief that criminal justice students, specifically those of minority students, are impacted enough by what they witness in social media that they are motivated, or demotivated to continue with their pursuits of a criminal justice degree.

Bandura posited that observations alone are not significant enough to change their motivations, but mental state at the time of the observations themselves could be significant enough to influence their decisions. But when observations are added with the four steps of attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation, the idea of learning emerges (Bandura, 1977).

Other themes about traditional media sources identified during data collection included the fact that the participants' criminal justice pursuits were cause for self-reflection in response to coverage of a police use of force incident, and that if the traditional media coverage of the incident reflected poorly on the police, the participant gave more thought to their decisions to pursue their degree. In the developing theme

some these minority criminal justice students disclosed that they felt it necessary to switch their academic directions out of concerns for their safety. Some participants were in fear of peoples' reactions when the nature of their studies was disclosed. One participant stated that their criminal justice studies were , "A target on my back". The themes which developed during this research study provide insights to other research topics.

Another evolving theme of this research was the psychological variable that the I had not considered when developing the research plan. The thought of the participants' morale and their desires were a consideration, of course, but not considered to be a factor beyond just deciding whether to continue with a criminal justice degree. All the participants disclosed that there was a psychological impact upon them when interacting with traditional media. Statements made during the interviews reflected that negative news media coverage had an impact on the participants, which is in line with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory.. It was at a point during the research that a participant disclosed that a relative, an uncle, had been shot and killed by police. This caused an emotional reaction which I had not been prepared for and which amplified the depth of the issue of public morale and how it is affected by how the various medias cover them.

The study results reflected various themes which are the foundation to the premise that traditional and social media's coverage of police use of force incidents do in fact have an impact on African American and Latino criminal justice students' perceptions, and whether they continue with their pursuits of a degree. The themes identified during the research exposed much more than a premise. They uncovered what the participants

unanimously called a need for social change. Most importantly, the participants disclosed that information dissemination was key to their perceptions and that transparency is important to them and those whom they interact with in public. However, participants clarified that transparency has to be trustworthy and, though trustworthiness was an issue with their perception of the police, it was an equal concern to them when deciphering the information they get from the media. At a point one of the participants even made the assessment that police could be more open but that with the lack of trust in the media that it is understandable why more information is not provided in a timely manner.

The conclusions drawn during the study pointed heavily to the negative perceptions of the participants of the portrayals of police use of force incidents they witnessed from traditional media. Perceptions with had an impact on most of the participants to change their studies, or to change direction within their studies which would avoid a uniformed police job, like that of forensics, correctional or similar social services like juvenile justice. A conclusion then could be drawn that there could potentially be a gap in research of the potential decline of minority police recruitment candidates

Research Question 2

RQ2: What influence does the social media's representation of police use of force incidents have on Oklahoma minority criminal justice students' decision to pursue a criminal justice degree?

During the study, the findings showed most of the participants who engaged in social media had a larger amount of distrust for information which they absorbed from

social media sources like Facebook, or Snapchat. Indicating that although social media was not a trustworthy source of information, it was a source of information and that the information absorbed did in fact have an emotional impact upon them as criminal justice students, and in some cases a definite impact on their decisions to continue on their paths of a criminal justice degree. Most notably, the researcher found that social media trustworthiness centered on what the participants viewed from close friends and family, not so much virtual relationships which were garnered on social media.

All the participants engaged in the interviews openly and, with little to no hesitancy. they gave clear indications that they felt a huge amount of distrust for social media. Nevertheless, the portrayals in social media of use of force incidents by police also caused as much distrust in police to such a degree as to make them reconsider their criminal justice degree. Some withdrew from their programs while others changed their areas of study within their degrees to navigate more towards a profession within criminal justice that did not involve uniformed police work. The difference in this aspect of the study is that traditional media was more trustworthy and had less influence on the participants, but social media was less trustworthy but had more of an influence on the decisions of the participants in regards to their criminal justice studies. This was a surprising outcome to the research which was unexpected to the researcher and creates the desire to further study at a later time.

Many references in the literature used by the researcher there were case studies which focused on perceptions of the police by the public, and police perceptions of disconnects from their communities, but it brings up a valuable question of if there is

awareness of these issues why is there not a pursuit for a solution to these questions? This in a sense brings up some phenomenological questions within this research that if the participants are aware of lack of trust of social media why allow it to have so much influence on their decisions? And if there are obvious needs for transparency why not seek that transparency rather than give up on being a part of social change and staying engaged? The findings indicate that the relationships the participants have on social media appear to have more of an impact on them and their decisions regarding their academic pursuits. As Social Learning Theory would predict, the participants gave indications that their behaviors or in this case decisions are based heavily upon perceptions they have from social media, thus in alignment with the theory of Bandura that they were influenced by their surroundings, some of which is virtual, some more directly.

A few emerging themes were taken from the participant responses. Of particular significance is that the participants gave less credibility to social media due to the amount of negativity they observed on sources like Facebook and Snapchat, as is relative to police use of force incidents. One specific incident which nearly all the participants gave as an example was the George Floyd incident. Nearly all the participants classified this case as an unjust use of force by police which they also claimed they received more information about on social media than traditional media.

Another developing theme which emerged during the research was that social media gave the participants a more significant feeling of fear for their decisions to continue in a criminal justice program if they stayed the course towards a uniformed

police job. Only one of the participants claimed they were not deterred and gave no credibility to the media, interestingly that student is currently service in law enforcement and is using his degree pursuits to advance up through the ranks of his chosen profession. Although not supportive of the developed theme, what was significant was that the people engaged with the participant on social media have attempted to heavily influence him to discontinue his academic pursuits, in some cases by insults and other methods of demotivation.

As with the themes from RQ1, there is reinforcement in the theme that morale is a concern of the participants as they observe social media portrayals of police use of force incidents. The participants disclosed that there is so much misinformation allowed on social media that they felt they needed to keep information about their academic pursuits to themselves out of fear of chastisement by those who they knew on social media who also were close friends or family from their demographic area. The participants who withdrew completely from their criminal justice program all indicated they feared what people would say or do if they continued to pursue their degree at this time, but that they have not completely ruled out returning to the criminal justice studies at a later time. A few of the participants who remained engaged in their criminal justice studies indicated that they are stressed about the possibility that they might be wasting time continuing with their degrees as some jobs within their chosen degree path are not as prevalent as a police job, which they now want to avoid for the foreseeable future.

An analysis of the interview responses elicited in this qualitative study reveals important and somewhat unexpected insights. First, as could have been predicted through

the application of Bandura's social learning theory, the subjects overwhelmingly confirmed the influence of traditional and social media coverage of police use of force incidents over their attitudes toward and engagement with criminal justice studies. Further, as was also predicted at the outset of this study, the interviewees indicated that reading and listening to the online discussions of close friends and family members had a stronger impact on their attitudes and decisions than did any other influence, including traditional media reports and/or the online discussions of strangers or distant acquaintances. This supports the premise that students' social support networks are highly influential, even when those close peers are not actively endorsing or critiquing a course of action. For example, a number of the subjects reported that they did not always disclose their decision to pursue a degree in criminal justice or a future career in law enforcement even to close friends. Nevertheless, the concern over the anticipated reaction of these important figures in the subjects' lives, as suggested by their social media activity, compelled a number of the subjects to either to continue to keep their professional plans a secret or to change their plans entirely. As previously noted, for example, a number of the interviewees reported withdrawing from their degree programs or transitioning from a planned career in law enforcement to a related area, like social work, as a result of their concerns over the anticipated reactions of close friends and family. This confirms Bandura's assertions regarding the profoundly social nature not only of knowledge acquisition and skill development but also of perception, cognition, and behavior, and decision-making.

Thus, the study, though limited in scope, provided significant data to support the hypotheses this qualitative approach was designed to assess, lending credence to the motivating premise that media representations of police use of force events have a significant impact on minority criminal justice students' decisions to pursue or abandon a CJ degree and subsequent career in law enforcement. Further, the data support the premise that the influence is magnified through social media in general and through the social media activities of close friends and family in particular.

One important but unanticipated theme that emerged from the study, however, is the impact of perceptions of increased levels of danger involved in a law enforcement career. Multiple interview subjects reported that reports in traditional media, as well as social media discourse underscoring the increased violence on the streets, particularly as directed at law enforcement, have had an immense effect on these students. These influences were particularly strong for the students who chose to withdraw from their programs, many of whom were underclassmen. Significantly, for the students who chose to withdraw due to intensified safety concerns, the possibility of a return to the field remained open. This suggests that the students perceived in the current environment an escalation of tensions between the community and law enforcement that made the level of danger untenable, even for subjects who had been prepared to encounter a high level of risk associated with their decision to pursue a career as a uniformed officer. The fact that the majority of these students emphasized a possibility of a return suggests that they perceived the current climate as perhaps temporary. Moreover, these attitudes suggest that negative perceptions of law enforcement, even when expressed by close friends and

family, were not wholly determinative for these subjects. The seeming escalation of the danger faced by law enforcement at present seems to have had the most significant influence on these subjects. This presents an important opportunity for future research in as much as an understanding of how minority criminal justice students evaluate and respond to perceived threat levels may provide a venue for improving the training and support of these students by administrators and professionals.

Limitations of the Study

This study possessed a few limitations. The first was the sample size of participants, though saturation was obtained and the sample size was not all from the same demographic area, the researcher believes that the study could have benefitted greatly from a larger participant pool. Though a small amount of participants, the backgrounds, experiences and opinions were important to the development of the phenomenon believed by the researcher to exist. What participation pool that existed did open areas for future theory and research of the influence which the various medias have on specific groups of students, in the case of this study African American and Latino/a criminal justice students.

Another limitation was the excluding of other ethnic groups of criminal justice students, which for all intents and purposes would have made this study too broad in scope. This also would potentially have required a mixed-method methodology, something which was not desired for this study but is a promising avenue for future studies by the researcher once the degree has been conferred.

Perhaps the most significant limitation of this study was that due to the pandemic most all the interviews were conducted via a digital media like Zoom, which left out much of the desired one-on-one contact a researcher likes to have with a participant, not only to build a rapport with them, but to also gauge their body language while conducting an interview. There are times that a person's body language supports what they are trying to say. In this study the video conferencing did not provide much beyond what the screen would provide, and made it necessary to ask the participant to repeat themselves due to some short interruptions in the video stream.

Recommendations

The data gleaned from the present study provide clear evidence that traditional media and social media portrayals of police use of force incidents do in fact have an effect on African American and Latino/a criminal justice student's decisions to continue with their degrees, either all together, or perhaps a change within their degree programs. The best recommendation to address this issue would be to raise awareness of the social problem which develops from the various media sources and to also raise awareness of the potential impact that misinformation has on a community when the future of a profession is at stake from potential candidates of change are diverted from their path.

Most importantly, a recommendation to be drawn from this study is for criminal justice entities to evaluate their transparency policies and allow for more information to be released as required. Both traditional media and social media have consistently shown the negative side of withholding information and how distrust can build in a community. It is this particularly important aspect which nearly all the participants disclosed as a

concern of theirs. A willingness to accept the police as doing something wrong if the agency was more open with the information was the consensus of the participants. To add to this recommendation it would be remiss of researcher not to disclose that nearly all of the participants stated that their academic mentors, or teachers, frequently avoided the subjects of police use of force and that if there was more debate and effort by them to discuss what was being said in the traditional and social medias, there would be more consideration by the participants to stay in their degree paths.

Ultimately the recommendations in a research study must be tangible in nature, but if there was a philosophy which could develop that would spread into communities it would be that of acceptance. All the participants disclosed a certain amount contempt by some in their community towards the choices which they made to pursue a criminal justice degree, regardless if that pursuit was directing them to uniformed police work, or not. The sociological and psychological impacts are less significant if persons closely related to the participants were more understanding that the participants want to be part of the solution, not the problem.

In a qualitative study conducted by Riter (2019), minority perceptions of police use of force mirrored the perceptions of this study but unlike this study Riter also interviewed the police who made the claims that minority perceptions of police use of force were being misguided by the media and suggested that the distrust between them and the police would at least be less stringent than it currently was at the time of the study. It is this point which was brought to light by many of the participants of this study, that the media is not trustworthy, and that public perception of police use of force

incidents could potentially be skewed. In the doctoral study conducted by Riter there was a theme developed which could suggest that the beliefs of people in specific demographics could potentially be different from others, which in this case the study was conducted in the Southeastern area of the United States. It is also suggested in this study that the level of distrust in police is also a demographically complex issue which if studies might reflect that people in certain areas would likely have a different opinion of police use of force, and of a distrust in police, something which was disclosed by some of the participants in this study as well.

If a researcher were to attempt to conduct research into a theory of social decline it would be paramount of that research to include what influences existed that involved current communication technologies, social media and traditional media. If the medias are lacking in integrity, it would be elementary thinking that the people who absorb the information from them could potentially be corrupted, even if they were not aware.

Bandura (1977) clearly posits that constant negatives projected upon someone will cause a negative perception by that person and that if they have influence over another person, it could potentially be enough influence to cause that person to see things equally as negative.

The articulable data provided during this study is significant to not only the researcher and participants, but also to society. If there are perceptions, misleading or not, which cause a disruption in the demographics of criminal justice studies it then becomes more than a passing concern, but at a point could become a catastrophic failure for the criminal justice profession as a whole. The awareness of the problem must go beyond just

acknowledgement and be addressed in a manner that stakeholders all approach the problem with an open mind and willingness to engage in amicable negotiations. Arguably to a point as a police executive, the researcher understands the perceptions of the police, and the data which shows an alarming number of people in society who are wanting in their understanding of what acceptable police use of force is, and what justifies it. Regardless of ethnicity, this is a problem throughout society where it seems at this moment in time to be a concern to such a degree that police are hesitant to commit to their duty and according to data recovered in this study, minority criminal justice students' perceptions of police use of force could potentially translate to less minority students seeking employment in the uniformed police services.

The answer the problem is what do we do to keep out minorities engaged in the criminal justice system, in the criminal justice profession. If they succumb to the peer pressure imposed upon them by friends and family in social media, and the perceived biasness of traditional media, there will be an extreme shortage of minorities in police sciences and police services. As in the research conducted by Gibbs (2019), there is a disproportionate number of minorities in the criminal justice system, and these disparities appear to be more significant in the areas where the highest level of distrust in the police exists. To prevent this there must be transparency, and engagement, not only by the police, but school faculty where the students are enrolled and engaged in the classroom, and community leaders need to come forward with a willingness to build part of the bridge to cross the gap and meet in a cooperative effort with the criminal justice system to keep minorities engaged. And then there is the matter of finding a way to teach that

First Amendment rights on social media, and the freedom of the press should be handled in such a way as to teach society to think before they react, about whether or not the media they are engaged in is misleading them. That is a task which will be much less achievable than community outreach and discussions, it would take those who depend on disseminating information being willing to equally engage in openness of information without political motivations. A problem which cannot be legislated without breaching some of the foundations of the Constitution of the United States.

Implications

Several critical issues emerged from this study which are reflective of negative perceptions of traditional and social media coverage of police use of force incidents by African-American and Latino criminal justice students. Firstly, most of the participants did not completely trust traditional and social media in general but were even less accepting of those medias' coverage of police use of force incidents. That mistrust was even more enhanced by the lack of conversation about the topic of police use of force, what was acceptable use of force and why more accurate information was not provided for them to make an informed decision.

A recurring theme of the study was that African American and Latino/a criminal justice students were afraid of offending people who they knew personally by disclosing their desire to pursue a criminal justice degree, some of them lived in literal fear of safety from people within their communities should it be discovered that they are or were engaged in criminal justice studies. This was for some of the participants to appear to be an emotional point to be made and that their desires to continue later was not out of

question. It is the emotional response of minorities as potential police recruits which Toby Miles-Johnson (2019) touches on, but most specifically mentioned was perceptions by minority police recruits, which could be compared to this study as it relates to Social Learning Theory, and the perception of police, specifically in this study was the perceptions of the study participants and their perceptions of police use of force.

The participants who disclosed their distrust in the traditional and social media also disclosed their distrust in the police but repeatedly clarified that their intent to pursue their degree was to help be a part of the change the law enforcement profession needed, but that it took an amount of community support for them to feel they were able to continue, this being indicative of the theoretical framework chosen for this study. This brings about the belief that society as a whole is less tolerant of the decisions people make and is more open about how those in dissent of the decision would express their opposition. There is a sociological implication here which could be a devastating one if qualified persons are influenced away from the solution does it not add to the problem? According to Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), the four steps to social learning are attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. If the media, and people on social media who have influence over those who are the future of a specific profession, deter them from their chosen path by use of negativity or hate, this will have dire consequences on society as a whole. This was something communicated to the researcher by some of the participants in direct words, other participants in the context of how they felt about their original decisions to enter a criminal justice degree.

Although some of the participants were leaving their programs, most of the remaining participants felt compelled to change direction within their degrees to avoid police work. They further stated that they might have been persuaded to stay engaged in that direction if there was a person who would have provided some mentoring for them, someone within the academic institution who would one of the participants said could have made the difference with just a little encouragement. This specific point is not germane to media or social media, but it is specific to the participants decisions to continue with their degree programs and is significant in their decisions to continue, or not. All individuals should be given a certain amount of respect and dignity regardless of their choices so long as those choices are to be part of a solution. The implications herein show a direct correlation between media, social media and the decisions of African American and Latino/a criminal justice students in continuing their criminal justice studies. How to address the problem is yet another research study about the human factor which exists where the solution is there but is being prevented by the lack of truth, acceptance and openness.

One of the most significant implications of this study is that distrust in the media and social media was equal to the distrust of law enforcement, a distrust that begins with the lack of transparency which allows for the various medias to fill in the gaps of information with their own narrative, most especially social media. The participants disclosed that the social media interpretations at times were so contradictory to the truth that it was alarming to them, but the impact was already felt and people around the

participants had already engaged on such a level that the participants felt the best approach was to avoid the situation.

People from different backgrounds represent different points of view and perceptions. In this study it was evident that that the demographics of the participants varied somewhat, some of them from lower income areas, others from the opposite, and other demographics which could potentially be a factor in the study, but there was no validation of a conflict of data or of the selection criteria for the study as all of the participants met the specific criteria. The study showed an overwhelming number of the participants were engaged in interaction with traditional media and social media coverage of police use of force incidents, and that their perceptions of that coverage was key to the decision of all but one former student's decision to discontinue their pursuits of a criminal justice degree, or modify their criminal justice program to better satisfy the needs of a different professional pursuit besides police work.

It could also be implied from the data retrieved in this study that a number of the people which the participants were personally connected who had a fundamental and negative opinion of the police and police use of force, also were not clear in their understanding of what justifiable use of force was and how, or what, a person had to do in order to cause the police to use force, most especially deadly force. In an article by Vespucci (2019) there is a definitive discussion about the research which he conducted about the variables in police use of force, specifically which police officers are more likely to commit to more aggressive use of force, but what was more aligned with this study was the perceptions of police use of force which like in this study it was suggested

that some in society are not clear in their perception of what constitutes justifiable force by police. The question for another research project which stems from the data collected in this research study is to determine if there is a fundamental misunderstanding by some in society about what is reasonable use of force by police, and if that misunderstanding is being fueled by misinformation which is being disseminated by the various medias which were being discussed in this study.

In the *Journal of Institutional Technology*, Deaton (2015) expands upon Bandura's Social Learning Theory and how it applies to modern day social and traditional media, and that these medias have a responsibility to the emotional responses of their viewers if their intent were to influence emotions for business purposes, most especially if those being influenced engage in civil unrest which erodes the morals of society. The query herein is what manner could these medias be held accountable without eroding the basis of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution? With free speech there is still a certain level of accountability if someone has knowledge that they are propounding falsities to create hate and discontent.

The themes and patterns of this study suggested that African American and Latino/a criminal justice students distrusted the aforementioned medias to a degree, most especially social media, but that they also distrusted police agencies for not refuting the negative information being portrayed. Their decisions were not to give more credibility to any group but to follow their paths as they felt safe to do so, and that at this point in time this meant the decision to avoid scrutiny of people they knew. Further, these decisions

were often attributed to fear of retribution from someone their neighborhoods, it was a better choice for them to alter their degree paths.

Implications for Social Change

This study can be a positive influence by contributing to positive social change by identifying a problem in society and providing ideas of how to address the ideas in a manner which will foster trust by those who are impacted by various aspects involved in this study.

The perceptions of people in the general public is that trust is fleeting and harder to earn today than that of a few decades ago. That the earning of trust is for someone on an opposite side to earn it through what some would call unreasonable measures. This is how dynamic the social media world seems to be, and perhaps at times how extreme. However, for a society to find a solution to the problem there must be more willingness to grant someone their trust. The future of the criminal justice system depends on people being involved who are a willing participant in change, and anything which stands between those who want to engage in change is something that must be eliminated. For one African American and Latino/a criminal justice student to steer away from a criminal justice degree because of what they see in the media, or social media is one person who might not be in the right place at the right time to be that spearhead of change. If the traditional media and social media are not trustworthy, they are culpable; if the educators are not open with encouragement, they are culpable. If criminal justice entities are not engaged in transparency to the various medias, they are culpable in the misdirection of solution.

In a qualitative study conducted by Jiles (2019), the question of qualified immunity of the police was brought into light by posing the question about perceptions, and who perceives police use of force as a paramount need. The participants in the study by Jiles provided insight like that of the participants in this study, and that the perceptions of the public had a heavy influence upon their beliefs of what constituted acceptable use of force. Police reform has been and always will be a concern of society, a society diverse as that of the United States will have differing opinions, much like the opinions of the participants of this study. In this study three of the 10 participants wanted to remain engaged in their criminal justice studies to continue serving in a police capacity if for no other reason than to be part of that reform, or change. If this study were to be accurate to a broader population it could be argued that just over a quarter of minorities remaining engaged in police services would not be complimentary to the needs of minorities in police service. With police reform there must also be engagement in that reform by people willing to stay the course and be a part of that social change.

Social change means that people must be accepting of that change and so long as traditional media and social media sources lack the respect of the people there will be a continued erosion of trust and a contributing factor to the moral decline of society. Not to say the censorship is key to the problem, but the refusal to dispel information known to be wrong either based upon the need for ratings or political motivations is contributing to the failure of society, especially those who might be more susceptible to the media influences. It is these things that need to be considered as part of changes needed within society.

Listed below are suggested steps to bring about social change.

1. Media social media sources should be less concerned about ratings and more engaged in open and communications. The promulgation of negativity feeds a problem, not providing for a solution. It is not censorship to provide information in a manner which does not provide a negative emotional response. Instead of making it appear as though a party is not open to comment, perhaps explaining that they cannot for legal reasons comment at this time.
2. A fundamental change in what information is released by agencies as it relates to police use of force incident would eliminate the fill in the blank's techniques deployed by the media which create negative appearances when later discovered to be partially, or completely untrue. A key to this study which came from interviews is that the media and social media portrayals of police use of force incidents might have been different if there was a more expeditious response by police.
3. Open communication in the classroom about issues regardless of the sensitivity of the topic could mean all the difference for a student to stay engaged. This was a point which was clearly made by more than half of the participants in this study. Many of the participants claimed they would have been open to continue their studies if encouraged by a teacher, or academic mentor.
4. Most importantly, if law enforcement administrators want to continue obtaining the best minority candidates, specifically ones with a college level education, there has to be a cooperative effort to combat the misdeeds of their officers by

first being transparent with community leaders, then being expeditious in the administrative handling of officers who have been found by their actions to be in violation of police, or law. Trust between community leaders and police administrators will foster a healthier community relationship and as such more minorities may remain engaged in their police studies, and a police career.

5. Lastly, though not likely to happen anytime soon, a change of humanity where people accept a person's decisions might be part of a solution and not a problem. To avoid the negative and embrace the positive by acknowledging that because one person in group does something wrong that not all people of specific group are wrong.

Recommendations for Future Study

This study has provided research information on the perceptions of African American and Latino/a criminal justice students regarding traditional and social media portrayals of police use of force incidents, further studies could be conducted in the following areas:

1. A possible decline in the recruitment of minorities due to societal distrust of police.
2. On academic engagement in phenomenological or sociological issues involving criminal justice reforms.
3. The effect of increased transparency of police agencies and the impact it might have on public perception.
4. The OODA loop of social media effects of misinformation.

5. Journalistic integrity and the impact that misreporting has on society in an age of immediate information dissemination.
6. Do academic institutions potentially have an impact on keeping minority criminal justice students engaged?

Conclusions

This study primarily focused on the perceptions which African American and Latino/a criminal justice students have of traditional and social media portrayals of police use of force incidents. While the intended goal was to determine what the decisions of the participants would be in relation to continuing their studies, this study uncovered much more. By observing and talking to the participants this researcher discovered that the participants want to talk about the problems they see, and they want to be engaged in the solution to a problem which they see exists. Whether or not the problem is distrust in the media, distrust in the police, or the lack of attention to their academic needs, all of the participants felt that the best approach was to leave their studies, or change course within their studies. This study went beyond misinformation and how it impacted a student, it went into an area which clearly exposes a sociological problem that is not just confined to certain demographics.

If one minority criminal justice student discontinues their pursuits because of any negative reason they feel there is not answer to, a society as a whole suffers, and anyone not willing to be part of the solution is part of the problem. The participants clearly embraced this research study to be heard and they all said that there is justified and unjustified feelings in society, but compounding the unjustified with misinformation, and

lack of transparency for that which was justified, has only developed a feeling of distrust and disconnection which has impacted each of the participants. None of them want to give up on their pursuits within the criminal justice academia but made hard decisions out of their own fears from a society which seems less accepting of individual desires and more accepting of group think and unrestrained expression.

The participants clearly stated that they believed from what they observed on traditional and social media that police use of force incidents in some cases were wrong, but that the response from society deterred them more than the actions of the police. That the motivations to be part of the solution to a problem was strong, but not strong enough to put themselves at risk from those whom they interact with most in society, and from the criminal justice field which they were hoping to join. Essentially stating that they were caught in the middle of two sides which has yet to see how progress can be made. All have stated a desire to return to their criminal justice pursuits when it appears safer for them to do so.

The civil unrest of today is not just a problem for criminal justice students but also of law enforcement agencies today where many law enforcement professionals are retiring from service, or are quitting long before retirement because society has been enamored with what they believe is misinformation from media and social media sources. The disconnect between communities and the police who are tasked with serving that community continually comes after each incident of police use of force even as some, or most of those cases the police were justified in their actions due to an imminent threat, a point which was brought up by the participants as they tried to describe their perceptions

and why they now are avoiding police work. Leaving many criminal justice programs wondering how to keep minority students engaged and law enforcement agencies wondering how it will impact their recruitment efforts (Braga et al., 2019).

Some of the participants clearly described their choices as being made because of what they believed were obvious violations of trust by the media and social media, but also of a deep distrust of police based upon personal interaction with law enforcement in their youth. This negative interaction with police fostered their desire to join the ranks and be a part of what they saw as the desperately needed change. But when confronted with the negativity of society as portrayed in the media and social media these participants decided to go a different route which might bring about the change, like the legal field or social work. This within itself hurts society if that one person is not in the right place, the right job, at the right time when someone needed them, something that some of the participants disclosed is something not being taught in the classroom and why they are diverting from their original path.

The question arises about the problem which exists and what answers can be derived from the data collected in this study. To that it become necessary to ask if there is a rational way to develop a response which would expose the negatives and bolster a positive reaction from those who are more keenly impacted by the negatives of what appears to be social media, at least more so than traditional media. Is there potential for the criminal justice system to be more transparent on social media? The question spawns an immediate reaction from many in the criminal justice profession that information cannot be shared until a certain point is reached in an investigation, this is something that

the researcher himself has struggled with as a police administrator who has followed the directives of attorneys who were charged with protecting the government entity who represented the law enforcement officials. Is there a way to release more information? And would more information create more distrust, or less? These are all questions which need answers, the problem is that they are questions being asked by the participants and that the lack of answers is what makes them reconsider their criminal justice degree, and pursuits. It is those pursuits which create a need for further research to answer that if minorities are distracted from criminal justice studies, is it possible that the number of minorities joining the police force will diminish? With fewer minorities working in key criminal justice jobs will that develop to yet another potential phenomenon? All in all, the need to seek answers could not be stronger and researchers could benefit greatly by finding those answers which hopefully more than just academic minds could benefit from.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Research Questions

What influence does the traditional media's representation of police use of force incidents have on Oklahoma minority criminal justice students' decision to pursue a criminal justice degree?

What influence does the social media's representation of police use of force incidents have on Oklahoma minority criminal justice students' decision to pursue a criminal justice degree?

Interview Questions

- Reassure the participant of confidentiality of the interview process
 - Provide participant with resource and IRB information
1. How do you define police use of force in your own words?
 2. What examples would you give as credible traditional media sources?
 3. What examples would you give as credible social media sources?
 4. What examples would you give as noncredible traditional media sources?
 5. What examples would you give as noncredible social media sources?
 6. How would you describe your engagement with traditional media in relation to frequency per day?
 7. How would you describe your engagement with social media in relation to frequency per day?
 8. How do you perceive traditional media portrayals of police use of force incidents?
 9. How do you perceive social media portrayals of police use of force incidents?

10. What impact do you believe traditional media portrayals of police use of force incidents have on you as a criminal justice student?
11. What impact do you believe the social media portrayals of police use of force incidents have on you as a criminal justice student?
12. What examples could you give to what you believe is acceptable use of force by police which you witnessed through either media source?
13. What examples could you give to what you believe is unacceptable use of force by police which you witnessed through either media source?
14. How would you describe your motivations to continue with your criminal justice degree when considering your feelings about the topic of police use of force as you perceive them from media in general?
15. Do you have anything else you would like to share with me today?
 - Ask the participant if they have any questions about the interview or study
 - Give thanks for the participant giving their time for the interview