

2021

An Exploration of the Impact of Organizational Subculture on Ethical Decision Making in Policing

Sonya M. Johnson
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Sonya M. Johnson

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

An Exploration of the Impact of Organizational Subculture on Ethical Decision Making

in Policing

by

Sonya M. Johnson

MS, Walden University 2014

BS, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, 1996

Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Policy & Public Administration

Walden University

August 2021

Abstract

The culture of the workplace setting intertwined with how one interprets ethics and code of conduct can be factors that separate acceptable and unacceptable conduct in policing. The reluctance of police agency executives willingness to assess the integrity of their departments often stems from the fear of negative community perceptions followed by unwanted oversight and operational recommendations. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of police officers regarding the influence of organizational subculture on ethical decision-making. The theoretical framework for this study used Sutherland's Differential Association Theory and Aker's Social Learning Theory. The research questions focused on exploring police officers' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences regarding organizational socialization and police culture. Data from 13 participants' semistructured interviews utilizing open-ended questions were analyzed through manual coding. Analysis identified the following themes and associations (a) perception of ethics (b) existence of subculture (c) personal integrity and socialization, and (d) police culture versus rewards and punishment. Findings indicated participants' experiences were strongly influenced by the subculture. Moreover, subcultures impacted how an officer decided to socialize, the difference in how ethical conduct was understood, and factors that drove the process of decision-making. Implications for positive social change include improvement of public policies addressing police culture and organizational structure, coupled with the inclusion of mandatory oversight and accountability programs to aid in decreasing negative perceptions of police.

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Dedication

I have not always taken the path of least resistance; nevertheless, over the years, my mother and stepfather were always present to provide both good advice and unmeasurable support even when they didn't agree. Many of my choices came with life lessons attributed to the examples set by both of them. The importance of education interlaced with compassion and service elevated both my personal and professional career, and for that, unwavering gratitude is necessary.

I thank God for the time he allowed me to have with two people who single-handedly gave me all they had with hopes that I would seize every opportunity to pause to give back to those in need or simply lacking knowledge and understanding. I dedicate this body of work to these two beautiful souls, Joe and Margo Swift, AKA Pops and Mommy, not here to witness the outcome of their hard work and this enormous endeavor but who without a doubt are watching and covering me from above. They would both appreciate my research topic and would completely understand my hope that my body of work would assist in changing the trajectory of organizational culture in policing.

Acknowledgments

Marlissa Rena Clark, my one and only child who continues to be the reason behind every decision I make. You have made my hard days bearable and my good days' worth celebrating. Thank you for seeing Mommy through this process, for being my cheerleader, and for pushing me to press forward. Thank you, Oliver J. Clark (Daddy) for inspiring me to want to be just like you. You gave your life to the law enforcement profession, and through you, I developed a passion for the work and the people who give of themselves tirelessly to ensure our safety. I love you. To Dorlene Clark, my stepmother, thank you for being supportive throughout this huge undertaking. To my sister and brother-in-law, Elisha, and Dave Roy, a huge thank you for your unwavering support and encouragement. Thank you for being my motivator when the nights were long, and the deadlines were short.

To Walden University Public Policy and Administration faculty and staff members, thank you for pouring into the minds of students like myself who have chosen to be those change agents you have helped us to become. Dr. Koehle, your direction, and support throughout has been an undeniable blessing, and I am forever thankful. Dr. Steven Cox, a remarkable and notable literary in criminal justice, I thank you for your advice and tutelage along the way.

To my special friends who provided support and encouragement, thank you. To the study participants, thank you for giving your time and sharing with me your personal opinions and professional experiences, that it may one day be used as a foundation for continued research and understanding of organizational culture in policing. Finally, I give all the praise and glory to God who strengthens me; without Him I am nothing.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The Law Enforcement Oath of Honor adopted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) is recited by all law enforcement personnel and establishes the basic tenants of ethical standards and expectations for officers who serve. The Oath is as follows:

On my honor, I will never betray my badge, my integrity, my character, or the public trust. I will always have the courage to hold myself and others accountable for our actions. I will always uphold the constitution, my community, and the agency I serve (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1957, p. 1).

The Oath of Honor is a constant reminder of the expected principles required in policing and is regarded as a prerequisite for ensuring absolute clarity concerning conduct, loyalty, and integrity to one's self and the law enforcement profession. Further, to enhance the expectation of conduct and the role of an officer, agencies purposefully engage the following nine policing principles:

- The purpose of the police force is to prevent crime and maintain order.
- Police depend on the approval and trust of the public in order to effectively do their jobs.
- The ultimate goal of policing is to achieve voluntary compliance with the law in the community.
- Police must be unwavering in their duties and adherence to the law, maintaining impartiality and avoiding the temptation to be swayed by public opinion.

- Police must recognize that the more cooperation they can achieve within the community, the less often they will need to use force to achieve compliance with the law.
- Police must maintain the public favor and cooperation by providing impartial and independent law enforcement services, as opposed to succumbing and pandering to the whims of the public. They must extend the same courtesy and respect to everyone, regardless of economic or social standing.
- The use of force and physical control is to be used as a last resort, only when other forms of persuasion have failed.
- Police officers must remember that they, too, are members of the public and that their purpose is to serve and protect the public.
- The true measure of the effectiveness of any police force is not the number of arrests or police actions taken, but the absence of criminal conduct and violations of the law” (Roufa, 2017, p. 1).

Background

Sir Robert Peel established The Peelian Principles in 1829 that were later used as a reference guide for understanding the purpose of law enforcement (Roufa, 2017). In tandem with an officer’s Oath of Office, The Peelian Principles demonstrated the importance of ethical conduct and exposed the linkage between the expectation of sound behavior, integrity, and impartiality of service delivery in policing. Over the years, significant philosophical shifts demonstrated occasional deviations from these basic principles (Archbold, 2013). In this study, I explored the phenomenon surrounding decision-making in law enforcement, using police-lived experience as points of reference.

Problem Statement

I explored the impact of organizational subculture on officer decision making in policing. A long-standing topic in the United States, the existence of ethical conduct remains both a critical component in delivering basic policing services and maintaining positive community relations (Kिताeff, 2011). Basic tenants of policing encompass a person's ethical capacity and how this is applied in both the personal and professional lives of officers. The significance of principled policing demonstrated the existence of citizen compliance as being a derivative of public opinion and perception that police are law-abiding, fair, and unsullied in their actions and behaviors (Jones, 2017). Literature suggests that when a positive perception was present, public confidence and cooperative behavior followed. Public trust has been the key to police effectiveness and the legitimacy of police actions, and in its absence, the maintenance and restoration of order in our communities has been challenging. (Kिताeff, 2011).

The history of policing is entwined with philosophical shifts regarding perception, public discord, and crime, the severity of the crime, occupational hazard, and community relations in policing. Scholars have examined policing subjects such as: organizational culture, community perception, hiring, and ethics, calling attention to the complexities of maintaining order by consent and regulation of the perception of police, its agencies, and the profession overall. "Despite the scarcity in research topics tailored toward exploring the organizational culture in policing and its subcultures, organizations must embrace ethical aptitude as a critical tool for effective operational practice and service delivery" (Kिताeff, 2011, pp. 91-92).

Purpose of Study

The significance of organizational culture and how it has impacted conduct in law enforcement cannot be explored without a clear understanding of how ethics has been perceived in policing and what role the culture of the organization has played in that understanding. The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore the impact of organizational subculture on ethical decision-making in policing. I examined the lived experiences, attitudes, and opinions of a diverse pool of sworn law enforcement officers and sought to recommend advancements regarding: (a) further research, (b) legislation reform mandating law enforcement accountability programs, (c) the influence and enhancement of training programs addressing ethical dilemma, and (d) executive leadership accountability programs.

Alignment

“Integrity is a personality trait that is strongly associated with ethical decision-making and involves honesty, trustworthiness, fidelity in keeping one’s word and obligations, and incorruptibility, or an unwillingness to violate principles regardless of the temptations, costs, and preferences of others” (Blumberg, 2018, p. 2). Policing actions stemming from a lack of integrity have created a breach of trust commonly associated with corruption. While often these actions are viewed as individual acts, the influence or culture of a setting may be contributing to and/or driving the unsolicited behavior. As Francis McCafferty (1998) explained, most agencies are committed to employing competent, honest, professional, and psychologically stable police officers but are often negligent regarding the degree of corruption that exists in the ranks of their agency.

Agencies have failed to consider what happens when the organizational degrees of corruption collide among officers, and the expectation of honest policing becomes impossible to achieve.

In the United States, the role of a law enforcement officer encompasses many tasks and responsibilities such as peacekeeper, problem solver, crime prevention, and maintenance of order. The ethical standard of an agency mirrors the personal standards of its leaders whether that be considered ethical or not. Despite the continual investigations of ethics in policing, the degree of decision-making has become more complex under intense scrutiny by the public. With these considerations to contend with, institutional versus individual ethics has become a critical issue for researchers and agencies to consider as the driving force behind the sustainment of ethical development of organizational culture (Blumberg, 2018).

Policing and public trust have become increasingly divided. The *code of silence* defined as the unbreakable bond among policing personnel has aided in that division and has created barriers in service delivery. These policing environments have perpetuated attitudes and behaviors among officers that have increased the dilemma of moral compromise (Blumberg, 2018).

Significance of Study

Decision-making in policing has played a pivotal role in trust and perception and efforts have been made routinely toward strengthening public confidence and increasing positive perceptions of police. Strategies were employed to reinforce the department's internal operations and legislation was created to mandate processes and procedures

surrounding recruitment, hiring, and training to employ the most credible and fit person for a police officer role (Blumberg, 2018). Nevertheless, discussions surrounding ethics still exist and recent policing events have shown the clear need for further inquiry and the impact these types of violations have had on an officer, an agency, municipal governments, and the communities they served.

In this study, I explored the effects of organizational subculture on an officer's ethical aptitude in decision-making, an area without significant research due in part to lack of reporting and the absence of mandates requiring such (Kitaeff, 2011). Without more specific research, a clear understanding surrounding the assumption that police agencies have employed the inclusion of explicit police and organizational oversight can not be achieved. Understanding of ethical aptitude among officers, policing policies, and procedures that support the fundamental value of ethics lacks clarity as well. Police culture, made of compromising layers, over time has influenced the perception of police organizational culture, public perception, and the policing operational purpose. However, the overall pressure to maintain the perception of police as a protector and those displaying unethical behavior as simply isolated incidences has been overwhelming apparent, thus supporting the perception that policing has been ethically sound (Corsianos, 2012).

The prevalence of toxic subcultures in policing requires exploratory research such as this study. Opportunities to explore the inherent systemic problems that have been impacting these subcultures will aid in understanding the purpose of police organization structure, what makes up its social construct, how the identified construct impacts an

officer's behavior, service delivery, and accountability for both the officer and the agency (Corsianos, 2012).

Research Question

The primary research question for this study was: How does police organizational subculture impact an officer's ethical decision making?

Paula Brough (2016) presented her cultural model that suggested officers have a distinct connection, often referring to each other as family. This familial bond was systemic toward the innate culture of policing that often set sworn apart from civilians and perpetuated peer subgroups that formed within organizations, developing their own rules of engagement and operational standards. The research did not exclude our exploration of the following:

The Decision-Making Process Officers Engaged In

“Ethical decision making within an organization is the manifestation of ethical conduct, which is dependent on ethical awareness” (Anthony, 2018). Brough (2016) suggested organizational control systems and hierarchy often created varying perceptions of accountability and expectation. However, she discussed a blur in the division of rank and file, stating a recent trend found in modern-day police rank structure as less rigid and rarely seen. Annelies De Schrijver and Jeroen Maesschalck (2015) defined moral reasoning as taking place using a four-prong approach (1) moral sensitivity, (2) moral reasoning; (3) moral motivation, and (4) moral character. Moral sensitivity requires acknowledging a dilemma has occurred. Moral reasoning is used to conceptualize the

conversation with self-regarding the dilemma and the decision options. Character and sensitivity are shown through the decisions made by the individual (De Schrijver, 2015).

The Rationale and Perception of Ethical Violations Among Police

Research has suggested the understanding of ethics is dissimilar among officers, and these variations are driven by professional and personal environments (De Schrijver, 2015). For example, an officer's decision to accept free food could be viewed as ethical because it has not been classified as harming anyone. On the reverse side, other officers may interpret accepting free food as unethical because the perception regarding accepting such gratuities may lead to bias or prohibited expectations. This example demonstrates that people have varying degrees of understanding regarding ethical violations. The interpretation of organizational culture impacts complex dilemmas, and significant factors such as rewards, punishments, and social exposure play a role in awareness and understanding (Anthony, 2018).

Discretion can be defined as one's latitude in the choice of action and is a daily function of the police (Cox, 2014). Because rules and procedures cannot account for all circumstances that might occur in the day and life of an officer, the need for discretion is paramount. Nevertheless, understanding how an officer executes discretion and the subculture's impact on such have been pivotal in comprehending organizational culture in policing. Cox (2014) states discretion in policing can be influenced by the following:

- Laws
- Departmental policy
- Political expectations

- Dilemma
- The occupational culture an officer operates within

Preceding examinations that focused on corruption and/or misconduct fell short of a thorough understanding as it pertained to both the individual officer's behavior and the setting the officer was exposed to (Wright, 2010, pp. 341-342). Findings have demonstrated the existence of the organization's subcultures and that standards set in organizations have been both implicit or formal and what has been understood regarding who has set these standards has been multifaceted depending on the demographics of the agency.

Theoretical Framework

I reviewed several theories for this study. Deontology Moral Theory, developed by Immanuel Kant, is used to examine what may drive ethical decision making. Kant (1788) reasoned that people's actions are based solely on duty and obligation to do what is morally right, and what is morally and ethically acceptable is widespread and understood. Making an ethical decision requires awareness and willingness to follow the standards previously set and accepted, such as don't steal (Business, 2017). The Deontological Theory in an organizational setting uses codes of conduct, policy, and law as the organizational benchmark of standard and acceptable behavior. If all officers are aware of and understand these standards, the theory holds that officers will then inherently comply with rules of conduct and organizational policy because it is their duty and obligation to do so (Business, 2017).

Edwin Sutherland suggested behavior, attitudes, and techniques were learned and reinforced through interactions and the associated frequency of those interactions (Anthony, 2018). He called this differential association theory. Ronald Aker's social learning theory, which built upon Sutherland's theory, states that behavior is a manifestation influenced by anticipated rewards or punishments either experienced or observed (Brauer, 2012).

Each theoretical premise is relevant for understanding the organizational impact on decision-making; however, I used differential and social learning theory as the primary theoretical positions for this study. Using these theories, I dissected the social settings of police culture and gathered information to better understand what drives subculture in law enforcement settings and the degree of the impact those subcultures possess. I assessed organizational challenges regarding how agencies monitored influence and upheld ethical decision making.

Nature of the Study

I used a qualitative phenomenological approach for this study. Phenomenological is the exploration of lived experiences through the lens of those having a relationship to the subject matter (Guillen, 2018). The purpose of the inquiry was to better understand the culture of law enforcement agencies and their social constructs. I explored training, organizational procedures, legislation, and accountability concepts in law enforcement organizations.

My objectives for this study were: (a) to enhance community-oriented concepts in policing; (b) to develop programs dealing with police perception; (c) to implement

progressive legislation addressing ethics, conduct, response to procedural violations, organizational oversight; and (d) to provide a clearer understanding of the culture of police organizational settings and reveal that historical settings of law enforcement agencies are no longer advantageous toward preventing crime, enforcing laws, educating citizens and building community relations.

Assumptions

The following were my assumptions for this study.

Organizational Specific Assumptions

“Research suggests organizational factors interact with individual propensities that lead to poor police decision making” (Lee, 2013, p. 387). I made several assumptions about policing culture.

- Every officer will experience an ethical dilemma at some point in their career.
- The memory of events is not as reliable as observation of events.
- The definition of ethics will vary among the different demographics within the law enforcement culture.
- Ethical expectations will vary among demographics and the organization's culture.
- Discretion can be viewed as the gateway to unethical decisions.
- Police need the public's help to solve and prevent crime.
- Police have a natural inclination to protect each other.

Methodological Assumptions

I designed this qualitative study to capture phenomenological experiences of officers, both current and retired, from law enforcement agencies across the United States. I used an interview methodology to gather information about the phenomenon.

My methodological assumptions included the following:

- With both a personal and professional background in law enforcement, there will be a predisposition to biases and/or subjective analysis.
- Participant self-reporting will be subject to memory, and therefore, may lack significant detail.
- Participants may be reluctant to reveal actual events for fear of negative repercussions.
- Participant anonymity may be lacking.
- Gathered data from participants would be honest and thorough.

Theoretical Assumptions

My theoretical assumptions were shaped by Edwin Sutherland's Differential Association Theory and Ronald Aker's Social Learning Theory was the epicenter of the study's theoretical assumptions. Social Learning Theory states that individuals are not inherently deviant, but rather describes human beings as sponge-like, taking on and displaying behaviors that were indicative of their social settings (Garduno, 2019). Aker suggests that behavior is influenced by rewards, punishment, and/or expectations either

perceived or observed (Brauer, 2012). Therefore, I assumed that interference in the decision-making process occurred when:

- A person's natural inclination to protect themselves or the group prevails, or
- When the social construct is different from one's own moral belief or behavior, and;
- Consideration of rewards and/or punishment supersedes what's right or
- What has been determined law or rule regardless of what outcome prevails.

Limitations

All studies have limitations. The limitations for this study included the sample size. A relatively small sector sample meant that I could not generalize. However, the data collection methods that I used were specifically developed for smaller samples to obtain comprehensive and in-depth lived experiences from the participants who would contribute to and enhance existing research. As a tenured administrative law enforcement professional, I understood the potential for bias my involvement would add to the research process. I mitigated this using the following procedures:

- I conducted each interview outside of the workplace to imply my role in the research process as neutral.
- All questions were general, open-ended, and not specific regarding any subject related incidences.
- I used member-checking and journaling techniques to reduce my bias.

I understood that data collection methods relied on participant-reported experiences rather than observation. Further, while I strictly enforced confidentiality, the perception of the lack of confidentiality potentially impacted willingness to participate and detail in the reporting of lived experiences by law enforcement officers. To address the latter, I interview each participant during a time when they were away from the work setting. I also conducted member-checking and journaling to ensure I captured the information as they intended it to be understood. Finally, I advised participants of processes I employed to ensure anonymity and presented them with research participation consent forms.

Operational Definitions and Key Terms

The following terms accompanied by their intended meaning are listed below.

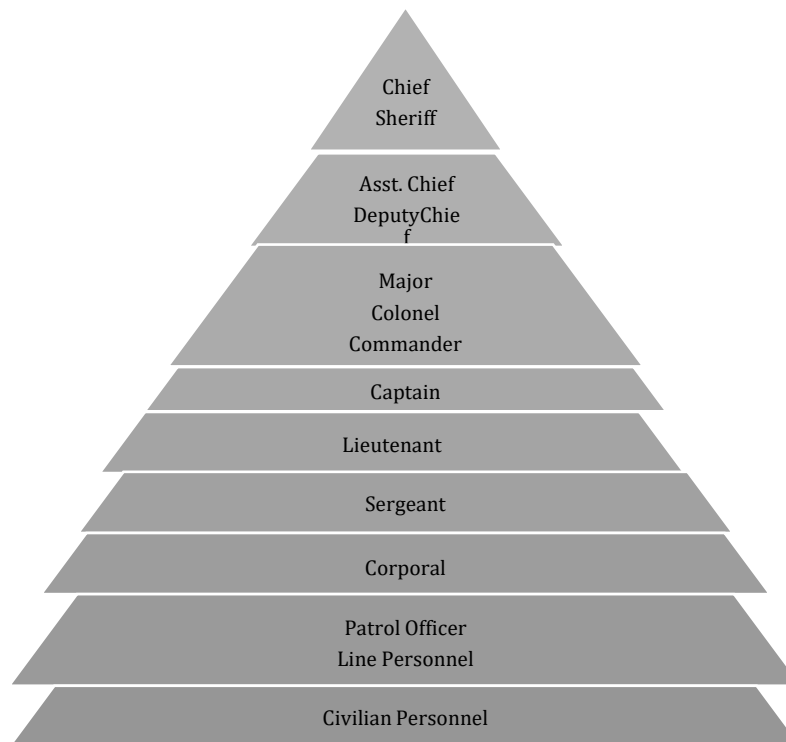
- *Code of Conduct*: Is referred to as an expected standard of conduct.
- *Standard Operating Procedure*: Agency specific policies and procedures detailing all departmental operational standards.
- *Blue Wall (AKA - Blue Code, Blue Shield, Blue Line, and Blue Curtain)*: Represents the unbreakable bond and loyalty among law enforcement professionals.
- *Subculture*: Represents underlying groups within a culture representing the associated attitude and opinions.
- *Sworn*: Any person with arrest powers.
- *Civilian*: Any person not classified as sworn and not having powers of arrest.
- *Command*: Verbal or written direction given by a ranking officer.

- *Executive Command Staff*: Sworn personnel with the rank of Major/Deputy Sheriff or above.
- *Calls for Service*: Any citizen request for law enforcement services.
- *Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA)*: a national law enforcement credentialing program setting the standards of practice for the delivery of law enforcement operations and services.
- *Internal Affairs (I.A.)*: A law enforcement organizational component responsible for professional standards and investigations regarding complaints against an employee and/or the agency.
- *Field Training Officer (F.T.O.)*: A veteran officer for a specified period of responsibility for teaching, training and monitoring the conduct, work performance, and other job-related skills of a new officer.
- *Recruit*: A new employee hired to become a police officer.
- *Beat Officer*: Is a Patrolman/woman with a ranking of Corporal or below.
- *Rank*: Refers to a sworn officer position classification.
- *Early Warning*: An agencies internal system used by Internal Affairs and Human Resource Management to identify employee patterns of potentially liable and/or negative behavior.
- *Whistleblower*: A person or group of people who make know the illegal and/or illicit actions of others that are taking place.

The below figure illustrates “Unity of Command” commonly referred to as rank structure and articulates that all subordinates report to one supervisor.

Table 1

Unity of Command



Transferability

Opportunities of transferability in qualitative studies such as this, where small sample sizes are used, are often rejected. However, Andrew Shenton (2004) suggested discovery should not be immediately rejected in research such as this. Shenton postulated that discovery derived from small samples can be useful information for consideration and applied to a broader group, thus strengthening the probability of transferability. In

this study, I sought to ensure the dependability and transferability of the information obtained to larger bodies of work by implementing the following:

- Specified criteria for participant selection
The specified set of interview questions
- Set timeframes for each interview session
- Interview sessions conducted by a third party independent of the law enforcement profession
- Participants from various law enforcement types
- Participants derived from across the United States

Dependability

Dependability asserts that when repeating like research, using the same criteria, similar results would be obtained (Connelly, 2016). However, research method characteristics such as type of researcher and participant increase the probability of decreased credibility. To aid in the probability of increased credibility, I included rich and comprehensive descriptions of each study participant followed by a review and critique of the transcribed and analyzed data. I provided each participant with transcriptions and analyzed data for review to ensure the accuracy of the information obtained. In addition, I discussed the processes and procedures of the study in complete detail to increase the dependability of the study findings.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the background of the study followed by a presentation of the problem, purpose statement, research questions, and methodology. I reviewed the theoretical framework, its alignment to problem, purpose, significance, and nature of the study. I discussed the data analysis techniques, potential limitations, assumptions, transferability, and dependability of the study. I included topic-specific terms accompanied by their definitions to assist the reader in understanding the context of the research subject.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Problem and Purpose

As policing evolves, it is interlaced with impactful elements that will again reshape the profession both organizationally and procedurally. Technology advancements, public policies, ethics requirements, community/police relations, and perception drive home the significance of what David Klinger (2004) called an understanding of organizational properties within police departments. Research emphasizes that police response to external entities can be impacted by the tasks they are assigned, and the quality of those interactions/responses may be shaped by the internal forces of the police department, therefore requiring a substantial understanding of the departmental cultures (Blumberg, 2018). Current research has linked critical issues in law enforcement, including community relations/perceptions, recruitment, retention, safety and crime solvability to hiring processes, compensation, generational challenges, risk management, and technology advancements (Curtis, 2017).

Events such as but not limited to the shooting death of Michael Brown by the Ferguson Missouri Police Department, the shooting death of Philando Castile by the Falcon Heights Minnesota Police Department, and most recently, the Dallas Texas Police Department's shooting death of Botham Shem Jean, demonstrated growing issues of government liability, increased probability of agency risk as it pertains to an agency and/or officer's questionable behavior, and the amplified downward trend of citizen perceptions regarding police, policing tactics and organizational credibility (Curtis, 2017). Though considerable research revealed ways to better identify how to recruit,

retain, enforce accountability, and legislate, lack of oversight regarding organizational health presented a gap in knowledge and remained a topic in need of more in-depth examination.

Current research notes subculture and occupational stress as two noteworthy contributing factors of law enforcement organizational culture (Garduno, 2019). These factors impact people's understanding of how an officer functions in his/her role and plays a significant part in administratively addressing the evolution of internal health and operational standards of policing organizations.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the roles subcultures embedded within agencies play in policing and their implicit impact on an officer's decision making.

In this chapter, I present comprehensive and contextual literature outlining the impact of law enforcement subcultures in policing on decision making. This research also shows the need to glean additional evidence surrounding this phenomenon and its overall detriment to the law enforcement profession. My goal was to improve systematic and operational approaches within police organizations, thus elevating law enforcement practices, organizational culture, and occupational legislation. The phenomenological method I used for this study examined societal challenges in law enforcement that are also often used to gauge the health and legitimacy of a law enforcement agency. Finally, I sought to provide insight to help agencies sustain, encourage, and promulgate ethical decision making as well as rooting out negative subcultures.

Organization of Literature

In this section, I list the organization of the literature I reviewed in a comprehensive outline. I categorized the literature according to the following topical areas:

1. Theoretical Framework
 - a) Deontology, Kant
 - b) Social Learning Theory, Akers
 - c) Differential Association Theory, Sutherland

2. History of Law Enforcement
 - a) Peelian principle
 - b) Political era
 - c) Reform era
 - e) Community response era

3. Organizational Culture and Influence
 - a) Ethics
 - b) Code of conduct
 - c) Decision making in policing
 - d) Organizational culture

4. Organizational Accountability
 - a) Law enforcement accreditation
 - b) Professional standards
 - c) Citizen review boards
 - d) Legislation

5. Literary Perspectives
 - a) Training
 - b) Hiring and recruitment
 - c) Discretion in policing
 - d) Rewards and punishment

Literature Search Strategy

I retrieved the literature reviewed for this project using Walden Library's multiple databases, City of Albany Public Library, International Association of Chiefs of Police Periodicals, Police Executive Research Forum Critical Issues in Policing Research Journals, Google Scholar, Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies, Department of Justice Bureau of Statistics, Cato Institute of National Police Misconduct and Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council. I conducted personal correspondence with professional law enforcement personnel both current and retired, as well as notable criminal justice scholars. I obtained information from textbooks such as but not limited to, *Introduction to Policing, Origins, and Evolution of American Policing, and Police in America*. I used Sage, Emerald Insight, JSTOR, Psych Info, and ProQuest to collect valuable information from the following scholarly journals: *International Journal of Police Strategies, Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, International Journal of Police Science Management, Theoretical Criminology, American Journal of Police, Journal of Integral Theory and Practice, International Journal of Research and Policy, Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of American Academy Psychiatry Law, Journal of Marketing Education, Justice Quarterly, The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* and *the Community Oriented Policing Office*.

Additional information that I collected was centered on foundations in policing, policing operations and organizational construct, police culture, and discretion. I collected and reviewed literature pertaining to theoretical perspectives surrounding social learning theory to provide critical insight systemic to police conduct, decision making

and citizen perception of policing today. To thoroughly gather the above-described comprehensive collection of literature, I used the following key terms and phrases in the literature search: *corruption and organizational culture in policing, decision making in policing, ethics in law enforcement, ethics and policing, policing, police misconduct, integrity in law enforcement, law enforcement culture, organizational culture in law enforcement and misconduct, history of policing, oath of office, blue wall, subcultures in law enforcement, policing and citizen perceptions, CALEA, accountability in policing, policing and discretion, policing and decision making, critical issues in current-day policing, social learning theory, social learning theory in decision making, impact of social learning theory on law enforcement, deontological theory, and whistleblower.*

Theoretical Framework

I reviewed two theoretical approaches to create a concrete foundation and determine applicability to the proposed research problem. Deontology Moral Theory developed by Immanuel Kant (Kantian theory) provided a perspective regarding ethics and conduct parallel to rules and/or laws that are critical elements found in law enforcement culture. Kant hypothesized that actions should be based solely on duty and obligation to do what is morally right (Britannica, 2018). Deontological Theory leans heavily on the belief that a person will make decisions based upon a rule of law and the duty to comply, using such as the determinate between what is morally right and wrong; however, the outcome of the decision may not be for the greater good (Cartney, 2019). Ever present in law enforcement, and organizational culture, laws and agency policies

guide process, actions, operational activities, and legislation (Cartney, 2019). Under this theoretical approach, the propensity to assimilate to cultural norms not in line with the policy would not prevail as the obligation to comply with organizational rules and/or laws would supersede that tendency.

Clarity of ethical consideration in decision making is paramount. Understanding that an officer's decision-making is a by-product of the organization is necessary to elicit social change in law enforcement and within communities. Adequate oversight and accountability must be present and employed in such a way to ensure agencies understand organizational health as a primary influencer to behavior and thought processes. Within the constructs of his deontology theory, Kant considers moral fortitude, equal treatment, and compliance but does not demonstrate the association and impact of the power of influence on groups and members of groups (Cartney, 2019). This impact is critical as the culture of law enforcement organizations are very bureaucratic and politically influenced while also socially driven and possessing organizational structures that have a military-like hierarchy. These characteristics often create significant challenges that cloud ethical clarity and result in decision making becoming problematic for the agency.

Edwin Sutherland's Differential Association Theory suggests opportunities are shaped as people engage socially and through intrinsic cultural trends (Church, 2012). Church explains that "Differential Association explains negative behavior as being learned through interaction with others and these interactions are formed through the transmission of social and cultural experiences" (Church, 2012, p. 1036). Differential

Association Theory surmises that if the associations are frequent enough and the criminal behavior observed occurs more often than acceptable behavior, then the subject would be more likely to demonstrate the behavior being modeled. An example of this would be shown in Ferguson Missouri Police Department (FPD). The findings reported by the United States Department of Justice indicated the culture of the environment was inherently corrupted by racial bias. Thus, the actions carried out by officers employed by FPD, paired with its frequency, increased the likelihood of any person employed by this agency to either assimilate or quit (Division, 2015). Sutherland's contribution to the study of criminology has been both highly regarded and criticized as being a "narrow and limited explanation of criminal behavior" (Friedrichs, 2016, pp. 57-58).

Ronald L. Akers and Robert L. Burgess extend Differential Theory through further exploration of human actions that violate social norms (Garduno, 2019). Akers and Burgess took the premises of the Differential and Reinforcement Association a step further by including the evaluations of rewards and/or punishments and modeling to create Social Learning Theory (Garduno, 2019). I selected Social Learning Theory as a theoretic perspective for bridging the understanding of humans and the influence of social construct because it best demonstrates the likely social settings that make up law enforcement agencies. In addition, Social Learning Theory establishes the fundamental reasons why those social groups and relationships assumingly drive behavior. According to this theory, negative behavior is not an independent action but rather "behavior" is the manifestation of associations and observations with which people most associate and the rewards and/or punishments that follow (Anthony, 2018). For example, an officer who is

trained in the academy to always double lock handcuffs when making an arrest will change their behavior as they frequently observe and are personally trained by their field training officer (FTO) not to perform this function in order to save time. When the latter behavior is coupled with quarterly awards for making the most arrests during a tour of duty, the likelihood of changed behavior increases, and as the rewards continue, the likelihood of continued behavior increases. The defined supplementary components of Social Learning Theory, definition, reinforcement, and modeling, are represented within law enforcement agencies and found to be critical to this assessment of subcultures; this dynamic is found to be a primary culture in law enforcement agencies today (Garduno, 2019).

These distinct components of Social Learning Theory guided my understanding of the power of one's surroundings, the influence of socialization with such and the control influence and socialization has on poor decision making. Differential Association, the first of four components, relates to the presence and impact of peer influence and the propensity to engage in either negative behavior depending on other central variables (Chappell, 2004). Those variables, definition, reinforcement, and modeling complete the decision-making process. Association to deviant behaviors under Social Learning Theory evolves through one's opinion regarding the behaviors exhibited. Rewards and sanctions reinforce these opinions, modeling the selected behavior (Chappell, 2004). Law enforcement culture perpetuates the need for an officer to assimilate for reasons such as but not limited to safety, employment stability, and professional advancement. An officer's role, rank, and tenure may influence the degree of need to assimilate. For

example, a young officer recently recruited to an agency will be engaged in recruit/field officer training and intense probationary oversight by other mid-level supervisors within a quasi-military environment where officers are graded favorably if they exhibit the ability to follow directions, demonstrate loyalty (often to personnel, not profession), and achieve skills proficiently. An officer's reported success rests with the supervising officer's review and expressed opinion of that review. The supervising officer determines the quality, longevity, and safety of another officer. Finally, others may view and grade a new officer unfavorably for refusing to engage in the expectation to falsify time, an understood and acceptable act within the agency subculture. According to Social Learning Theory, the probability of an officer engaging in a behavior would be dependent on the frequency of confrontation, the reward versus the punishment should they engage, and the person who is modeling this behavior. Akers states, "Social Learning Theory is highly applicable and does a good job of explaining police behavior that includes both conforming and deviant police actions" (Anthony, 2018, p. 29-30). It is for this reason I selected both Differential and Social Learning Theory as the most applicable theories to use for this research study. It aided in bridging the gap in knowledge regarding why subcultures exist, how they impact the decision-making process carried out by officers, the social implications subcultures impose on communities, and an agency's ability to subjectively and strategically provide oversight and accountability.

My proposed research was Phenomenological, rather than Ethnographic. While the Ethnographic perspective was critical in addressing social issues surrounding organizational culture in law enforcement, the collection of data from an observational

perspective delivers what might be viewed as subjective data interpretation. The inclusion of a Phenomenological approach allowed for the insertion of data collected from lived experiences, attitudes and opinions from those directly associated with the subject matter in question.

Historical Relevance in Policing

As I obtained a better understanding of organizational subculture and its impact on an officer's decision-making, I could not exclude previous research that has aided in generating societies' perception of law enforcement, the policing profession and the officers employed to carry out crime prevention/enforcement responsibilities. Concepts of policing in the United States have been adopted from the English policing system. A philosophy requiring acceptance and approval from the people served, based upon Peelian principals, has shaped policing as we know of it today (Cox, 2014). Policing known to be very fluid, changing frequently to meet the challenges of the times, repeatedly experiences legislative and citizen perception shifts often based upon public opinion and high-profile events. Ironically, these paradoxical shifts are not evidenced-based but have been and continue to be the impetus to several notable modifications within the policing culture (Jones, 2017).

The history of policing to date accounted for three notable shifts attributing to how police officers are viewed, how policing services are carried out, the structure of policing organizations and the intended purpose for police organizations in society. Very early policing systems required abled-bodied men to protect their property during ancient empires to the early 1800s (Corsianos, 2012). This system served as a notable but basic

approach toward the protection of communities and property. Policing evolved, enhancing policing concepts, organizational structure, and philosophy. These enhancements can be attributed to Sir Robert Peel's concept of policing by consent, politics, and community police perception. Peel's approach infused the nine principals and the notable policing concept that encourages policing in cooperation and acceptance from the people. This approach was the springboard to centralized and military-styled policing cultures in the United States and encouraged the selection of men possessing upstanding moral character with a good appearance familiar with their communities they were charged with policing (Cox, 2014). The Peelian approach, while still thought of today as the basic foundation of policing, is viewed as the impetus toward the first of three shifts in the culture of policing (Jones, 2017) .

The political era, the first of three transitional policing shifts, was perpetuated by a lack of systematic structure. Policing dealt with pitfalls such as but not limited to departmental division, loyalty to associated political party instead of the profession, and internal corruption influenced by longstanding relationships between hometown officers, citizens, and influential people. The political era not only negatively impacted the charge of policing and how these services were to be carried out but also instigated biased policing (Corsianos, 2012). In addition to the structure and external influences impacting policing services during this era, it also grappled with the type of people hired and the basic qualifications. "During this era, the basic qualification was associated political party rather than ability men with an array of problems and sketchy backgrounds were hire as police officers" (Cox, 2014 p. 24). Organized agency training was not a priority,

central administration was poor, and officers were forced to handle problems however they saw fit. “Essentially, the prevalence of police and neighborhood ties, political affiliations, fragmented services and lack of central command fostered inconsistency, confusion, partisan policing eventually forcing a call to yet another transitional reform” (Cox, 2014 p. 31).

The second transition in policing occurred in the 1930s. Increased corruption and violence spawned the reform era, which shifted the perception of a police officer from that of a job performed by willing and able bodies, to that of a profession with occupational standards. At the same time, reformers worked at distancing police from public influences often considered conflicts of interest to prevent or at least mitigate potential influence and corruption (Jones, 2017). During this shift, “reformers influenced moving policing toward a profession with less focus on service to more focused on crime-fighting” (Cox, 2014, p. 25). Reformers also worked to centralize services and command, remove political influences and adopt more military-like organizational structures and units (Cox, 2014). It was during this era that policing culture organizationally and operationally experienced much change. However, the evolution during this period was not without concern. Policing experienced events including but not limited to the election of the Hoover administration, World War II, the Korean War, and violent civil discord. These events ultimately decreased interest in becoming a police officer (Cox, 2014). Policing also saw other changes such as “increased technologies, e.g., radios, cars, development of ethical codes and standards, training, and education requirements” (Cox, 2014, p. 25).

On the heels of many prevalent social issues such as but not limited to legislative actions placing monumental restrictions on policing behaviors, social disobedience, and civil unrest, policing experienced an astronomical spike in crime and a notorious increase in officer/citizen related complaints (Cox, 2014). During the late 1900s, policing experienced an increase in research that focused on evidence-based standards of practice, administration in policing and police-community relations. From this significant research, Peelian principled policing was reestablished as a significant foundation and tool in policing. Also, the development of oversight commissions and community policing programs focusing on service delivery, accountability and policing/citizen relationships were established.

The third and final recognized policing transition, the community era, occurred between 1980 through the early 21st century. During this era the focus of policing shifted back to bridging police and the community. The realization of the importance and need of the community in fighting and preventing crime became very real. Coupled with the use of even more advanced technologies such as but not limited to policing communications, analysis, and detection, law enforcement agencies developed community-oriented programs that aided in bridging relationships with police and citizens. The once-popular styles of policing that encouraged officers to bond and build relationships with its communities became vital toward establishing trust, increasing positive police perception, and fighting crime (Cox, 2014).

Some have argued that another notable shift in law enforcement, the homeland security era, occurred on the heels of the 9-11 terrorist attack and has changed the

perception of threat, degree of purpose and responsibility, and crime-fighting strategies (Cox, 2014). Policing experiences over the past eight years have influenced police perception as well as prevention and response methods in law enforcement, shifting responses toward militant activities and raising issues such as privacy versus protection, ethics, accountability, recruitment, training, education, multicultural societies, globalization, and police misconduct. Coupled with technology advancements, the landscape of crime and responses to crime have both negatively and positively influenced policing organizations and their subcultures.

Ethics, Conduct and Decision Making in Policing

The evolution of policing philosophies has altered policing concepts and approaches over time, thus impacting how policing services have been delivered, understood, accepted, and evaluated. The outcomes of such inquiries have initiated changes in recruitment, retention, crime prevention, ethical standards and the infusion of attention to ethics and misconduct, accountability or lack thereof (Brough, 2016). To better understand the complexity and importance of ethics, misconduct, and decision making in policing, one must first define ethics. *Introduction to Policing* defines ethics as, “the study of right and wrong, duty, responsibility, and personal character all of which have an implicit modifier moral attached to them” (Cox, 2014, p. 241). Ethics is concerned with an officer’s moral aptitude, personal character and the ability to distinguish right from wrong and using such as the foundation when carrying out their responsibilities (Cox, 2014).

Ethical aptitude directly associated to conduct drives the actions of an officer. Ethics is the fine line between accepting a free meal in exchange for forgoing a citation or the distinct discernment between whether or not to call attention to the discretions of a fellow officer. Ethics, in short, is what determines the behaviors and/or conduct of a person. In policing, ethical decision making and conduct play a pivotal role in community relations, crime solvability, prevention, and safety of officers. Agencies that understand the necessity of ethical decision making combined with the inclusion of the Peelian approach to policing have implemented codes of conduct to assist in sharing the message of expectation placed on officers.

Codes of conduct applied to all law enforcement professionals, both sworn and civilian, are those that detail the expected behavior of those within the profession both while on and off the clock. The International Association of Chiefs of Police Law Enforcement Code of Ethics adopted in 1957 stands as the commitment and mission made by law enforcement officers to the public they serve.

As a law enforcement officer, my fundamental duty is to serve the community; to safeguard lives and property; to protect the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or intimidation and the peaceful against violence or disorder; and to respect the constitutional rights of all to liberty, equality, and justice.

I will keep my private life unsullied as an example to all and will behave in a manner that does not bring discredit to me or to my agency. I will maintain courageous calm in the face of danger, scorn, or ridicule; develop self-restraint; and be constantly mindful of the welfare of others. Honest in thought and deed both in my personal and official life, I will be exemplary in obeying the law and the regulations of my department. Whatever I see or hear of a confidential nature or that is confided to me in my official capacity will be kept ever secret unless revelation is necessary in the performance of my duty.

I will never act officiously or permit personal feelings, prejudices, political beliefs, aspirations, animosities, or friendships to influence my decisions. With no

compromise for crime and with relentless prosecution of criminals, I will enforce the law courteously and appropriately without fear or favor, malice or ill will, never employing unnecessary force or violence and never accepting gratuities.

I recognize the badge of my office as a symbol of public faith, and I accept it as a public trust to be held so long as I am true to the ethics of police service. I will never engage in acts of corruption or bribery, nor will I condone such acts by other police officers. I will cooperate with all legally authorized agencies and their representatives in the pursuit of justice.

I know that I alone am responsible for my own standard of professional performance and will take every reasonable opportunity to enhance and improve my level of knowledge and competence.

I will constantly strive to achieve these objectives and ideals, dedicating myself before God to my chosen profession... law enforcement (Police, 2019).

Police work requires officers to deal with a substantial amount of non-criminal activity, creating windows of opportunity to imply degrees of discretion (Blumberg, 2018). Research showed that diversity within law enforcement impacted the perception of ethics because individual differences are born from our own lived experiences, perceptions, and moral standard.

Poor decision making by patrol officers, the unwillingness of agencies to assume ownership in unethical behavior, and the systematic inclusion of legislation seen as shielding questionable police behaviors, have skewed the perception of police and policing services. The polarizing impact of police decision making impacts the ability to effectively address community crime (Blumberg, 2018). Decision making can be directly associated to the following:

- Moral Sensitivity: Understanding an ethical dilemma exists, the response options available, the impact of the response rendered by the officer, and an officer's degree of empathy and perception.

- **Moral Judgement:** The decision that is made by the officer in response to the ethical dilemma.
- **Moral Motivation:** Once a decision has been determined the officer must then be motivated to carry out the selected plan of action.
- **Moral Character:** The act of carrying out the identified plan of action is profoundly impacted by a person's moral character (Blumberg, 2018).

Sensitivity necessitated acknowledgment as well as an understanding regarding what is acceptable and moral. Judgment called to question the examination of choices made to address the issue and compelled an understanding of the level of discretion allowed and how it is carried out. Motivation and character, the components that had the most impact on the proposed study, offered an in-depth look at what influences follow through or deviation from the prescribed plan of action (Blumberg, 2018). Motivation and character, combined with judgement, are important considering the probability of opportunity for episodes of dilemma in policing (De Schrijver, 2015).

Organizational Structure, Culture, and its Subcultures

The role of organizational impact on the decision-making process needs more study, and police researchers have largely ignored the role that organizational and environmental factors play on decision making when interacting with citizens (Unnithan, 2015). Organizational structure may lead to misguided approaches regarding accountability, training, and policy if not appropriately studied. Law enforcement culture, like the military, is a complex, tight-knit system with established cliques and formal groups that officers will be subjected to either systematically or by choice.

Organizationally, law enforcement agencies are structured as quasi-military environments. Bureaucratic in structure, law enforcement agencies use an authoritarian command in which direction flows one way: top to bottom. Roles and responsibilities are often assigned systematically according to rank and file, specialization, tenure, and education. Rank personnel, who are all classified as sworn personnel possessing the legal authority to make an arrest, follow an organizational hierarchical pyramid:

- Chief—CEO
- Deputy/Asst. Chief—Aid
- Major—Bureau Commander
- Captain—Command Level Division Commander
- Lieutenant— Unit Supervisor
- Sergeant—Unit Manager
- Line personnel
- Civilian personnel (Professional and/or Administrative)
- Civilian staff services

Each of the listed ranks holds specific duties, responsibilities, privileges, and authority. Each rank requires a different skillset, education, experience, and tenure. In most agencies, planning and organizing are typically carried out by the upper tier of the ranks while those in the lower level spend a considerable amount of time coordinating and directing (Cox, 2014). Nonetheless, this rank structure identifies the chain of command and clarifies who gives orders and who communicates with whom (Cox, 2014).

The degree of function and responsibility greatly depends on the demographics of the organization, considering size and geography. Additionally, “Unity of Command, another unique component of the police organization, ensures every member of a police organization reports to only one immediate superior, while Span of Control refers to the ratio of supervisors to subordinates” (Cox, 2014, p. 41).

Civilian personnel occupying support service positions within law enforcement agencies depending on size, geographic location, are utilized differently ranging from assignment of roles such as but not limited to:

- Research and planning
- Budgeting
- Data collection, crime analysis, IT
- Training
- Counseling
- Communications
- Legal advisors
- Personnel management

Each of the above listed are typically considered professional assignments requiring specialized education and professional experience reporting to command-level personnel for the purpose of advisement (Cox, 2014). Additional dynamics within police organizations include police unions and collective bargaining, which have existed since the early 1800s. As of 2011, the Bureau Labor of Statistics reported a civil service union

membership rate of 37% to that of 6.9% in the private sector (Statistics, 2012). Labor unions across the law enforcement profession often drove a wedge between leadership and line-level personnel. The typical concerns managed by labor unions for non-exempt personnel include but should not be limited to pay, insurance, vacation and sick days, pensions, longevity pays, hiring standards, discipline, grievance, promotions, and procedural rights of officers.

When considering the internal structure of a law enforcement organization, one must not ignore how these components drive an organization's culture and, more importantly, its potential impact on behavior. While codes of conduct, ethical codes, legislation, and organizational policies established the parameters by which an officer carried out his or her duties, it was the subculture of an agency that taught an officer how to carry out those tasks, setting the standard regarding what is acceptable, with whom to form relationships with both internally and externally and personal disposition toward the state of policing (Cox, 2014). Often, the subculture is the driving force behind cynicism, burnout, and emotional strife, exacerbating the division between internal agency systems monitoring accountability and compliance. The process of socialization within police organizations was both necessary and unavoidable. Socialization began at the point of entry for recruits and continued until the officer separated from the agency. The ability to associate determined an officer's tenure with the agency and governed if an officer arrived home safe at the end of their tour of duty.

Literary Perspectives

In Larry Anthony's dissertation *Police Culture and Decision Making*, he suggested that justifying the modification of organizational settings would require agencies from which our data would be extracted to first acknowledge a problem exists. Only then would the information collected be valuable to the existing bodies of work and aid in preparing officers and law enforcement agencies to better meet the challenges of the times. Researchers such as Ann Mills (2003) concur with the idea that the influence of an organization's environment drives conduct and service delivery and impacts organizational outcomes. One must remember that organizational legitimacy is subject to the social climate of the communities the agency serves. For example, following the Michael Brown shooting in Ferguson, Missouri, the Department of Justice investigation found the Ferguson Police Department (FPD) to have committed unethical acts. Consequently, it mandated that FPD comply with many standards of practice to change both the culture of the agency and the relationship/perception of the police by its citizens.

Unfortunately, this mandate didn't assure a change in perception by Ferguson residents. Joanne Wilson, a longtime Ferguson resident said she would never trust the police in Ferguson. Wilson spoke of the history of racial bias and mistreatment and said the changes made will never change how she feels about FPD because the mistrust and unethical behavior by the police has gone on too long (Wilson, 2019). This response and the research of Anthony and Mills further emphasized the importance of conducting the proposed research. Once the factors that create agency undertones that are not conducive to positive perceptions and police relationships are identified, organizational culture can

then be adjusted to perpetuate positive behavior before negative subcultures form. If this can be done, if and when incidences occur that are subject to poor decision making, they can truly be labeled as an isolated incident” as agency policies and patterns of behavior would support such a claim.

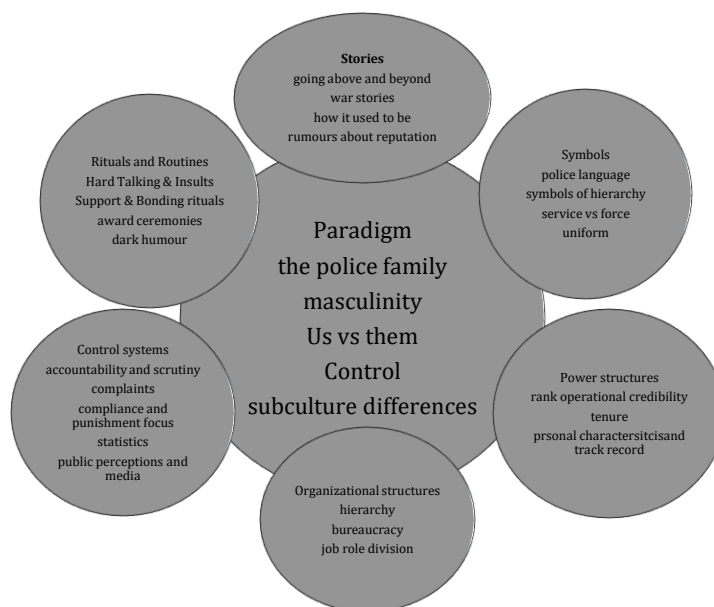
Mills (2003) described a reluctance in policing to place a microscope on an agency’s efforts to evaluate organizational settings and ethical shortcomings. Understanding organizational subculture and its influence from its purest form are best accomplished through the inclusion and evaluation of lived experiences. Lived experiences told by those having had those involvements bring us closer to the factual elements driving behavior, decision processing, organizational make-up, development of subcultures, its personal influence and social impact. Brough described the organizational culture in policing as three-pronged; “a cross between assumptions of basic tenants combined with shared perceptions of organizational practices and organizational core values and concepts” (Brough, 2016 p. 29).

Brough’s research called attention to changes in policing such as but not limited to organizational demographics, advancements in technology, and increased attention to organizational accountability. This transitional characteristic required empirical research to assist in developing clarity surrounding how the evolution of policing and its current state impacts law enforcement subcultures. Brough demonstrated her research findings using the diagram shown in Figure B. Common trends, associations and themes are consistent with my proposed research assumptions and its goal to address associated social problems stemming from negative organizational subcultures. The cultural web of

occupational position, personnel demographics, public perception and internal standards influenced the spawning of various subcultures and impacts law enforcement (Brough, 2016).

Figure 2

Police Family Paradigm



Literature Themes

The study of policing subculture and its impact on decision making through a cultural lens, increased opportunities to inject mechanisms counteracting the modeling of poor behavior and the systems that support that behavior. Literature regarding the study of police misconduct and excessive use of force has focused primarily on understanding the acts of the individual officer (Anthony, 2018). To address the ambiguity surrounding the culture of policing, research has investigated those mechanisms that are related to the occupation; however, more knowledge is needed to better understand the association

between police behavior and culture from a whole group perspective (Ingram, 2018). To fully comprehend decision making, some knowledge of what an officer's decision-making process is when faced with a moral dilemma must be understood. James Rest (1994) explains this as the ethical decision-making model. This approach was designed to include varying aspects of influence on the decision-making process.

As a criminal justice professional, I'm charged with policy development, standards oversight, and conducting applicable research as it relates to operational readiness pertaining to my parent agency. During my 25-year law enforcement tenure, I can attest to organizational shifts made toward strategically addressing ethical conduct and use of force. Because of such operational scrutiny, the implementation of training components such as oral review boards, ethics, diversity, critical incident, psychological testing, and extensive background checks, have been either implemented and/or tweaked and have indeed enhanced the quality of the law enforcement candidates. While the quality of the potential hires has increased, no efforts have been made to assess if those qualifying characteristics enable the officer to overcome ethical challenges in the workplace stemming from organizational influence.

Brough (2016) indicated in her study of police organizational culture that while increased attention has been placed on accountability, it only referenced the acts of the individual officer's behavior. Brough's research further pointed out that increased scrutiny has resulted in officers doing whatever necessary to protect themselves when conduct and decision-making does not line with core values and department policy.

An interview with a colleague detailed their professional experience surrounding such behaviors. The interviewee surmised that ethical awareness was inconsistently understood among law enforcement personnel and attributed this factor to workforce diversity and inherent human elements that each person brings when hired. He suggested that subgroups that are formed within agencies impact how officers are trained, how they interpret policy and how punishment is delivered when ethical violations occurred.

A 40-year law enforcement veteran shared with me his own experience of an ethical dilemma occurring early in his career. This dilemma set the stage for justification for conducting the proposed study. The interviewee described their experience as one of many dilemmas that occurred as a result of unethical direction given by the supervising officer/field trainer.

My FTO told me to spend my tour of duty sitting with him in a restaurant versus patrolling my beat as required by agency standard, city ordinance and oath of office. I knew it was wrong, and every time he would respond to requests for updates on his location and lie, it made me very angry. But he was my FTO, so what other choice did I have at that point in my career? I didn't feel as though I had any other choice. It wasn't like people weren't being taken care of, and if something urgent would have happened, we would have responded. After several tours of duty like that I really didn't think it was a big deal. At that stage in my career, had I ratted him out, that would have been career suicide.

Evidence suggests that "solidarity between police personnel is one of the most powerful elements comprising police culture and that officers are expected to

demonstrate loyalty to colleagues above all else” (Brough, 2016, pp. 29-30). Studies also suggest that while camaraderie within law enforcement is a cultural characteristic, it also provides a sense of security among the rank and file. The sense of security, however, often creates an organizational underbelly protecting illicit behaviors of fellow officers (Brough, 2016).

Research has influenced the implementation of specialized components such as but not limited to training, hiring practices, more extensive background checks and psychological evaluations (De Schrijver, 2015). Kohlberg’s 1973 explanation of moral development theory suggested that the implementation of the above components indeed help mold and/or develop cognitive behavior in a new officer, but a tenured officer’s reasoning is impacted by the environment in which they operate (Kohlberg, 1973). Major themes in literature suggest that the process of decision making is a by-product of the environment. My study sought to increase awareness regarding organizational subculture and its impact on how an officer ultimately responds when faced with a dilemma. To understand the culture of an individual officer is to first understand the culture of the organization (Anthony, 2018). The health of any organizational culture can be associated with and be the building blocks toward service delivery, social and occupational perception and how a profession evolves (Dubois, 2014).

Summary

A phenomenological perspective is applicable to understand the complexity of organizational subcultures and its impact on ethical decision making. Phenomenology allowed me to gather data through multiple layers of lived experiences. Through my

proposed study, I sought to add to the existing body of knowledge that pertains to organizational culture in law enforcement and how these settings influence and officer's ethical decision-making ability.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the personal lived experiences of sworn law enforcement personnel regarding the impact of organizational subculture on an officer's ability to make ethical decisions. Understanding the motivation of police decisions cannot be dissected and/or evaluated without consideration of the environment in which they are a part.

Purpose of Study

My improved understanding of the culture and more importantly subcultures in police organizations assisted in the development of better equipped and ethically sound law enforcement officers. Information derived from the inquiry aided in decreasing liable incidences and assisted in continual efforts toward increasing positive police-citizen relationships and perception. Gaining this specific information revealed not only the aspects of an officer's decision-making processes but also situational reasons why participating officers engaged in types of decision-making processes. Additionally, understanding possible influential factors were important in the inspection of law enforcement components such as but not limited to ethics training, leadership development programs, and organizational structure in law enforcement agencies. These aspects are critical toward equipping industry leaders, policymakers, and over-sight components to better address the challenges that have plagued and are currently pervasively impacting law enforcement practices today (Lee, 2013).

Research Design

I developed this research to gain additional knowledge and understanding of the following research question: How does police organizational subculture impact an officer's ethical decision making?

Central Concept

Previous studies regarding organizational culture in law enforcement have typically focused on two generalizations: occupational characteristics and its impact on behavior (misconduct and corruption) versus the observation of differences among officers within an organizational structure (Blumberg, 2018). The purpose of this study addressed a gap in knowledge regarding a lack of understanding concerning behaviors influenced by embedded social systems within organizational settings.

While the topic concerning ethics in policing has gained increased attention worldwide, a lack of focus concerning an organization's culture and its impact on ethical conduct still persists (Lee, 2013). Entrenched subcultures prevalent within law enforcement organizations have been shown to be pervasive and, in some cases, the primary cause for illicit behaviors by law enforcement officers. While leadership's willingness to assess the integrity of their organization has not garnered much attention, the measure of ensuring legitimate policing has fallen on the assessment of the individual officer (De Schrijver, 2015).

Method and Justification

I employed a qualitative Phenomenological research design to allow for open-ended inductive study design and simultaneous data collection. Edmund Husserl, noted

as one of the famed philosophers of the 20th century, created this form of research (Beyer, 2016). This Phenomenology approach aided my ability to capture the lived experiences of the research participants. Adams noted Husserl's (1983) assertion that a researcher who conducts a Phenomenological study should approach the world with the conviction to "alter it radically" (Adams, 2018, p. 48). Edwin Sutherland's Differential Theory and Ronald Aker's Social Learning theory suggest behaviors positive, or negative are learned and reinforced through interactions and the associated frequency of those interactions. Akers suggests the reinforcement behind human behavior is often influenced by anticipated rewards, punishments, and observations of such (Anthony, 2018).

The use of a Phenomenological approach provides a platform to extract data from the shared lived experiences of law enforcement professionals taken from first person (Beyer, 2016). Phenomenology is the study of people's personal experiences, and it is through these accounts of lived experiences that common and/or shared understandings can be identified. In turn, these commonalities become recognizable and descriptive components regarding the essence of the phenomenon (Guillen, 2018). The collection of first-person lived experiences ensures what is recorded is what was intended to be conveyed by the giver of the information, aiding in the discovery of the underlying concepts and essence of the prescribed phenomenon (Guillen, 2018). Researchers who use this methodology can establish core themes, patterns and behavioral relationships that go beyond common interpretation and understanding of the phenomenon that will aid in building bridges between systems and individual behaviors (Guillen, 2018).

To capture the essence of those attitudes and opinions, I conducted personal interviews to assess relationship, cause, and action. I constructed open-ended interview questions with the intent of drawing lived experiences from sworn members of the law enforcement profession to extract themes and provide evidence surrounding the existence of organizational subcultures, the impact these cultures have had on an officer's ethical decision-making, and an officer's understanding of ethics and law enforcement socialization.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher in this research study was to be the primary instrument of data collection. I gathered and categorized data that I later analyzed and used to isolate phenomenological inferences regarding the identified research question. To accomplish this goal, the primary instrument of data collection must be in tune with personal experiences, prior beliefs, attitude, and opinions while leading the research process. Adams (2018) states in his dissertation, "a challenge of conducting a phenomenological study for a researcher could be knowing what the common experiences are of the participants" (p.51). For example, when interviewing mothers regarding the experience of childbirth, if the researcher has experienced childbirth, the personal experiences of the researcher could in-turn disrupt the integrity of the data collection, analysis and reporting process (Adams, 2018),.

I am a law enforcement professional of 24 years, residing in a metropolitan area of the Southeast Region of the United States, and am currently employed by a municipal law enforcement agency with responsibilities of providing policy, certification, research,

and grant writing oversight. I have cultivated a law enforcement career through serving in many roles such as but not limited to corrections officer, probation officer, parole officer, attorney general director, criminal justice educator, public policy administrator, and law enforcement standards program assessor. Each of these roles and the associated responsibilities have prepared me for this study and molded both conditional and unconditional responses regarding the law enforcement profession. Having experienced both negative and positive workplace interactions, I credit direct exchanges with police as a citizen as being primarily positive with only one exception: experience systemic to that of racial profiling. A positive family reputation and my father's policing reputation have assisted me in my professional and citizen/policing interactions. I detailed an evolution in policing pre and post 9-11, witnessing firsthand the current state of policing and its impact on race, gender, and community perception.

I was born in a small, predominately white town of approximately 24,000 in northern Illinois, relocated as a young teen to an urban and more diverse city in southern Illinois outside of St. Louis, Missouri, which provided exposure to personal relationships with people from diverse settings and circumstances. Those associations allowed me to understand first-hand the gross inconsistencies demonstrated in both the law enforcement and judicial systems. This exposure, coupled with my personal experiences, further aided in the development of attitudes and opinions regarding policing, the role of police administrators, the perception of policing and the state of the criminal justice system.

As an African American female law enforcement professional in a male-dominated profession, I credit negative professional experiences as being directly

systemic to those characteristics. I remember my grandfather, after being passed over for promotions because of the color of his skin, having no recourse even though he outworked his colleagues. I remember my father's failed attempts at progressing within his policing organization until finally being told he would not progress any further than the rank of Sergeant. I, too, have been excluded from organizational groups, been categorized as a civilian whose place and purpose was to support not lead, been excluded from career development opportunities, labeled with the perpetuation and stigma of being confrontational or often coined the "angry, black woman." These experiences have shaped both positive and negative attitudes and opinions.

My personal situation is a direct predisposition to process and understanding regarding the realities within law enforcement. Policing as a profession of integrity with an indispensable amount of authority, which, if not overseen and given to the right persons, can become a profession that threatens rather than protects. Leckie (2012) noted the importance of a researcher bracketed personal realizations so as not to interfere with the development, process, analysis, and reporting of the research study data responses. I gathered proposed data by way of personal semi structured interviews employing questions that focused on an officer's lived experiences surrounding situational dilemmas while on the job, understanding of ethics, integrity, discretion, authority, culture, and subculture in law enforcement.

As the primary data collector, I maintained a neutral disposition, fostering the already established relationships with each of the purposively selected research participants. I displayed loyalty toward the willing participants and concealed the identity

of the research participants so as not to taint or threaten the researcher/participant relationship.

Setting and Sample

Location of Data Gathering

Research participants who agreed to take part in the semistructured interviews had a choice of conducting their interview via phone. Literature suggests that using a setting where the participant feels comfortable and safe will aid in the researcher's ability to build and/or maintain a positive rapport and assist in obtaining the truthful and rich text from the respondent regarding their experiences (McGrath, 2018). Due to the sensitive nature of the described phenomenon, law enforcement agency settings were not an approved site selection. I conducted each of the in-person interviews in neutral settings not associated with law enforcement and/or criminal justice professions, i.e., probations departments, correctional institutions or judicial courthouses, or personal homes. The above-listed provision was set to protect the confidentiality of the participants and to decrease the potential for power imbalance that is often the cause for bias and inconclusive data (Leckie, 2012).

Population for Study and Participant Eligibility

In the proposed research study, I identified the study population as sworn law enforcement officers. The classification of race, gender or geographic location was not a research participation determinant. An officer's sworn status and length of tenure was the primary selection criteria. Each of the selected professionals possessed at a minimum, 3 years of sworn law enforcement status whether currently employed or retired. Those

participants falling into the subcategory of retired could not have been separated from employment for more than 6 years. Participants obtained their law enforcement experience from agencies of varying size, location, and type i.e., police departments, sheriff's agencies, school and campus police. I developed the selection criteria to ensure increased opportunities to obtain the rich text from diverse law enforcement professionals of varying organizations, thus expanding my understanding regarding distinctions within law enforcement organizational culture. I established parameters to ensure those invited to participate would have a high probability of having had firsthand lived experiences regarding the research question. I also considered data saturation, reliability, and information that is interchangeable between the group and subgroups of policing professionals. Subgroups identified were classified as the different rank structures law enforcement professionals possess as well as gender and race.

Sampling Methods & Determination

I developed the sampling strategy to ensure a diverse cross-sectional representation of law enforcement professionals was selected, considering the dynamics and layers systemic to law enforcement organizational cultures. Employing a cross-sectional design increased the probability of gaining varied lived experiences regarding organizational subcultures, the multi-layered facets of these subcultures, the circumstances in which they thrive or not and its impact on ethical decision-making.

Nonprobability purposive sampling has been recognized for aiding in and uncovering what has happened, its systemic impact and other prevalent themes or associations (Leckie, 2012). I identified the selected sampling strategy as best suited for

the proposed research study as it builds upon both what has been determined as best standards of practice in qualitative research and has proven to garner the richest text taken from data collected. The selected method of non-probability purposive sampling was the best and most common use of sampling for qualitative exploratory research (Leckie, 2012). The sampling method balanced the explorative research through information derived from a selected and refined group of individuals most likely to have had experiences that are close to the identified phenomenon. Research participants possessed wide-ranging law enforcement background with work experience such as but not limited to, patrolman, specialty task forces, investigations, support services, professional standards, and training. There were no restrictions regarding age, race, rank, or position.

Sample Size

The literature points out concern regarding the lack of attention given to sample size in qualitative research (Boddy, 2016). “However, the essence of ensuring validity and reliability critical toward ensuring credible research should consider sample size” (Rijnsoever, 2017, p. 1). Consideration of sample size is a key component in data saturation defined as identification of reoccurring themes and patterns across collected data allowing such study to then be replicated, the intended goal in any qualitative research (Adams, 2018). Current research also indicates data saturation in qualitative research can be achieved from a sample size of three to five participants. (Adams, 2018). Literature supports the basic consideration of sample size to those who have direct insight and/or experiences of the phenomenon (Leckie, 2012). As I do not intend to generalize

the results of this study from the sample to the general population, I established a minimum of 10 participants to use as informants. The use of 10 informants provided rich text and thematic nuances to increase the probability for researchers to replicate such qualitative research as credible and trustworthy (Cope, 2014).

Characteristics of Sample and Participants Identified, Recruited

The characteristics of those invited to participate in the proposed research came from the policing profession with known and certifiable status as a sworn law enforcement professional granted arrest power. The identified characteristics ensured those participating as research informants were those closest to the prescribed phenomenon with the probability of having experienced situational episodes involving dilemma and organizational influence (Rijnsoever, 2017). Those selected to be invited ranged in age, demographics, rank, gender, race, and tenure and each possesses diverse specialized law enforcement background.

I derived potential research informants from my professional relationships developed over a 24-year law enforcement career. Recruitment of identified potential interviewees was carried out by way of a personal “Research Participation Invitation Letter,” which detailed the purpose of the proposed research and interview participation aspect. I forwarded the letter to each qualifying potential participant, following Walden IRB approval, through mail and/or email to ensure personalization, participation anonymity and documented participation in the proposed research as strictly voluntary.

Data Collection

As the primary instrument of the data collection, qualitative data from the transcription of personal interviews were gathered and analyzed. Interviews were defined as a researcher and informant communicating for the purpose of identifying unobservable attitudes, opinions, and experiences related to the research phenomenon (Leckie, 2012). To identify reoccurring themes associated with the proposed research phenomenon, the selected method of data collection was preferred in obtaining past lived experiences from those closely associated with the phenomenon. The delivery of a semi structured interview process resulted in rich and in-depth text. *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research* defines semistructured interviews as those employing flexible open-ended questions setting the stage for the respondent to provide rich and descriptive responses regarding their lived experiences (Leckie, 2012).

Interviews allowed me the opportunity to solicit personal and in-depth responses from the interviewee and to ask, when necessary, additional relevant questions in no predetermined order to build upon the interview experience. Literature states this process in qualitative discovery increased both the validity and trustworthiness of the research (McLeod, 2014). In contrast, the use of structured interviews was defined as rigid in setting because they employ a specific set of questions that are delivered in a systematic way that eliminates opportunities for impromptu discussion (McLeod, 2014). the selection of semi structured in-person interviewing was most appropriate for this inquiry to ensure rich, in-depth responses that would render reoccurring thematic responses. Volunteer research participants engaged in one personal interview. Due to the COVID-19

pandemic, all interviews were conducted by phone. Research suggests qualitative in-person interviews typically garner the best result because of the inclusion of human interaction (McLeod, 2014). However, “recent literature suggests telephonic interviews have shown to be as effective” (Adams, 2018, p. 57). Further, literature also suggests telephonic interviews allow flexibility in scheduling and some degree of anonymity. These components were useful when discussing topics that may be sensitive to the interviewee. An interview invitation assisted in soliciting research participation and conveying the interview process, purpose, procedures, format, and expectations and privacy. Literature supports the use of such interview tools, stating its use aids in clarity for the interviewee and formatting process for the researcher (McNamara, 2019). I recorded all of the interviews utilizing a hand-held voice recorder for ease in thematic analysis and reflective journaling that I completed following each interview.

Instrumentation Procedures

I used phenomenological interviewing techniques to collect meaningful data through the in-person interview. “Used in qualitative research approaches, phenomenological interviewing allows the researcher to develop and deliver questions focusing on the meaning of the participants' experiences” (Merriam, 2009, pp. 92-93). “Credible qualitative inquiry requires the researcher obtains data that connects with the reality of the phenomenon and the conveyance of one's lived experiences are recognized by others in like environments” (Cope, 2014, pp. 91-92). Therefore, the construct of the interview questions and the environments in which the interview takes place increase the depth and quality of the data collected (Merriam, 2009). The established interview

questions addressed critical components encompassing the research phenomenon. I developed questions to extract the attitudes, opinions and lived experiences of officers regarding the following categories:

- Perception of and experiences regarding ethics.
- Perception of and experiences regarding the integrity
- Perception of and experiences regarding organizational culture in law enforcement
- Perception of and experiences regarding organizational subculture in law enforcement
- Perception of and experiences regarding organizational influence and;
- Perception of and experiences regarding organizational socialization.

Each of the questions were constructed to stimulate responses that were sensory, knowledge and opinion based. The inclusion of non-identifying background information assisted in ensuring a participant's qualifications are relevant to participate in the proposed study (Leckie, 2012). Employing the use of personal interviewing as a data collection method inferred the information obtained would not be used for the purposed creating generalizations of the whole sample population but would provide identifying common occurrences that can be used to draw a conclusion and substantiate theoretical position. I asked the following interview questions:

- IQ1: What does police organizational culture mean to you?
- IQ2: Describe what would be the ideal structure of a police organization.

- IQ3: What does police subculture mean to you?
- IQ4: What does ethics mean to you?
- IQ5: What does integrity mean to you?
- IQ6: Some people would say ethical violations in policing are accepting free food, what would you tell them?
- IQ7: Tell me how important social relationships are in your role as an officer?
- IQ8: Describe your experience navigating police workplace culture.
- IQ9: Some people would say assimilating to workplace culture is the only way to survive and move up in law enforcement, what would you say?
- IQ10: Describe the impact police subculture has or has had on your ability to be successful in the workplace?
- IQ11: Who do you believe officers identify as setting the standards in law enforcement organizations and why?
- IQ12: Some people would say specific policing demographics such as (rank, gender, and race) influence decision-making, what would you tell them?
- IQ13: Tell me about a person who has influenced and elevated your career.
- IQ14: What is your opinion regarding how established policies and procedures impact an officer's ethical decision making?
- IQ15: What is your opinion regarding how discretion in law enforcement impacts an officer's ethical decision making?

- IQ16: Can you describe a time where the decision-making dilemma was caused by agency policy and subculture standards colliding?
- IQ17: Tell me about how you perceived the outcome impacted you professionally and personally?
- IQ18: As a young and seasoned officer would you intervene if you witnessed unethical conduct?
- IQ19: How did the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, MN make you feel?
- IQ20: How did the behavior of the observing officers in the George Floyd death make you feel?
- IQ21: Is there anything else that you would like to add with regard to understanding the impact of organizational subcultures in policing and its impact on an officer's ethical decision-making?

Merriam (2009) describes sound interview questions as those that are understood using common language and words that are reflective of the culture and world view of the interviewee while paying close attention to avoidance of technical jargon. I constructed each of the above questions to solicit personal feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of affected officers regarding organizational culture in a law enforcement setting. By using hypothetical devil's advocate and ideal position developed by Strauss, Schatzman, Bucher and Sashin's *Four Major Categories of Questioning* and Patton's *Six Types of Questioning*, I was able to focus on the personal experiences of an officer's attitudes and opinions regarding organizational subculture, ethics, integrity and

relationships and its impact on their ethical aptitude while on the job (Merriam, 2009). I advised each participant of their agreement to participate in only one interview session; however, each participant had the right to cancel participation at any time with no threat of negative and/or punitive action. All interview sessions began with a review of disclosures and prescreen interview questions.

Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed for thematic references using manual coding. I used transcription to develop each recorded response into a detailed written record used in the thematic coding process. The manual coding process used thematic coding, sorting, and processing of data to ensure a comprehensive and systematic identification of rich and robust themes across data collected. I then carried out an inductive and comparative analysis throughout the data collection process to provide descriptive insight adding knowledge to the fundamental research inquiry aiding in conclusion and recommendation development.

Trustworthiness

Challenges in qualitative research are those surrounding the actions of conducting and reporting of information gathered (Cope, 2014). Qualitative exploration builds upon the findings of personal experiences, the probing and defining of an identified phenomenon and the development of plausible concepts, that are supported by the collected data (Cope, 2014). Selected research participants were identified through professional relationships established throughout my career. The prolonged engagement provided a foundation to obtain rich and credible data as trust and rapport with

participants had previously been established. Such rapport aided in the participant feeling comfortable with divulging truthful responses dealing with sensitive topics. In addition, the proposed research fell into the following categories:

- Acts as the research instrument.
- Has established relationships with the selected research participants and;
- A current law enforcement professional working directly with some of the research participants.

Cope (2014) noted that researchers must record their own attitudes and opinions to thematically bracket their personal bias. I maintained a reflective journal notating my thoughts and feelings through the data gathering process, which mitigated opportunities for personal bias and/or situational subjectivity. Following each of the interview sessions, I employed member checking as an additional level of accountability to ensure that what I had recorded and transcribed was, in fact, an accurate reflection of what the interviewee intended to convey.

Protection of Participants Rights

Ethical Issues

Ethical issues surrounding the proposed study involved confidentiality and sensitivity surrounding potential information described by the research informant. Such information posed potential harm to the participant as undesirable behaviors revealed would have an undesirable impact on the participant. In addition, the potential for possible negative influence may have impacted both the potential participant's willingness to participate and/or to provide truthful and descriptive responses (Connelly, 2016). Even though

confidentiality under these circumstances was identified as a critical research component, literature regarding research design and the recommended process regarding steps to protect confidentiality was not well defined (Connelly, 2016). Kaiser (2009) defines the use of alternate methods of participant protection as the inclusion of methods to protect deductive information revealed in participant responses that may lead to the respondent being identified. I included the following methods to ensure confidentiality during the entire process of the proposed research.

- Each of the selected potential participants agreed to engage in the proposed research were non-identified and assigned a participant number.
- Each of the participants was contacted and recruited using methods of anonymity such as personal letters and emails.
- IRB approvals were obtained before the collection and/or recruitment of any participants
- All issues of confidentiality and protection from harm were addressed during data collection, data analysis/cleaning and before dissemination.
- Participants were well informed regarding the use of data and how results will be disseminated and;
- Post-interview confidentiality forms were used to obtain permission to publish and/share information collected (Kaiser, 2009).

All data collected for the proposed research was electronically stored and password protected. I maintained all written transcripts, memos, journals, field notes, and

permissions in a secured compartment located at my home, following the guidelines as set by Walden University. A confidentiality agreement was secured using Rev.com, and the documents will be maintained for five years, following the conclusion of the research study as prescribed by Walden University document retention provisions. Following the expiration of such time, all documents will be destroyed.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided a detailed description of both the methodology and intended design as well as justification for the selected methods to be employed. I addressed my background influences and potential biases, followed by a plan of action to address potential ethical issues and implementation of participant protections. Issues of credibility, reliability, transferability and conformability and detailed justification for research inquiry was provided.

Chapter 4: Data Collection and Analysis

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to explore the impact of organizational subcultures in policing and its impact on ethical decision-making from the lived experiences derived from semi structured interviews with 13 law enforcement professionals. Through this research, I explored the potential negative influence subculture may have on police, causing unethical decision-making and thus negatively impacting police citizen relationships and the perception of police.

Research Question

The following research questions was presented to explore the impact of organizational subculture on ethical decision-making in policing: How does police organizational subculture impact an officer's ethical decision making?

Setting

Initially, the interviews were going to include a face-to-face interview option; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all participant interviews were conducted by phone. I conducted these interviews using a secure line, in a setting selected by each participant that was private, quiet, safe, secure, and not at their place of employment. Using the research study letter of invitation and consent form, I explained the confidentiality of the study and used no identifiable information in the report of findings.

Sampling Strategy

To ensure complete data saturation and to aid in an increased understanding surrounding the research question, I employed a non-probability purposive sampling method. After selecting a pool of law enforcement professionals from which to draw

study participants, I emailed 30 invitations to participate and consent forms, Appendix A, beginning on July 17, 2020, and lasting through August 1, 2020, the point of sample saturation. I established the invitation pool from professional acquaintances formed my lengthy law enforcement career. Those selected possessed law enforcement expertise coupled with the likelihood to meet established criterion with high probability of providing useful and meaningful information close to the research question. Of the 30 potential participants, 13 met the preliminary criteria and agreed to volunteer to participate in the study. Three invites were eliminated for not meeting the established participant criterion by exceeding the years of separation from law enforcement employment, and the remaining 14 either did not respond or consent to the invitation to participate.

Data Collection

I conducted semi structured recorded phone interviews August 5 through August 12, 2020. Each interview began with a review of the interview process, confidentiality, and the participant's right to decline participation anytime during the interview. Additionally, my role as the researcher was thoroughly reviewed, making sure each participant understood any previously established relationships had no bearing on the data collection process. Following confirmation, I thanked each participant for agreeing to participate. Before the start of questioning, I established that each participant was comfortable in his/her surroundings, free from distractions, with an ability to hear clearly. Using an Olympus Model VN-541-PC, I recorded each interview and maintained them in my home office space in a locked filing cabinet. Each participant was informed of the

start of the interview, at which time I recorded the rich data received from the respondent. To aid in mitigation of potential researcher bias and to ensure the accuracy of the reported lived experiences, I employed a member-checking process for randomly selected questions. I transcribed the responses on the date of the interview with confirmation of accuracy obtained from each participant and conducted a second review of transcription at the conclusion of all interviews to correct any errors.

The participant invitation and consent letter contained all of the interview questions to mitigate a potential participant from declining to participate due to an unknown line of questioning. Each interview was stored for back-up on a USB drive securely maintained in the locked filing cabinet along with all consent forms, hard copy transcripts and participant demographic information, and will be maintained for a period of no less than 5 years.

Participant Demographic Profiles

Participant's demographics were diverse, aiding in a cross-sectional account of lived experiences as it pertained to the research question. The Participant Demographic Table shown below highlights the range in age, rank, years of service, agency type and size. The participant data table details the diverse demographic for each of the study participants.

Table 1

Participant Descriptor Data Table

ID #	Sex	Years of Sworn Service	Position/Rank	Currently Employed	Type of Agency/Size
0120	M	10 +	Lieutenant	Yes	Campus/ Medium
0220	F	10+	Lieutenant	Yes	Sherriff/Large
0320	M	20+	Chief	Yes	Municipal/Large
0420	M	10+	Sergeant	No	Municipal/Small
0520	F	10+	Sergeant	Yes	Campus/Small
0620	F	10+	Lieutenant	Yes	Federal/Large
0720	M	25+	Chief	No	Municipal/Small
0820	M	10+	Officer	Yes	Municipal/Large
0920	M	30+	Asst. Chief	Yes	Municipal/Medium
1120	M	15+	Sergeant	No	Municipal Large
1220	M	20+	Chief	Yes	Municipal Small
1320	M	10+	Lieutenant	Yes	Campus/Small

As shown above, the participants' degree of law enforcement experience ranged from 10 to 30 years with 53% of those participants employed by municipal policing agencies of varying size. Of the study participants, 69% were male and 46% held the rank of a sergeant or lieutenant, otherwise referred to as middle management.

Data Analysis

Overwhelmingly, participants acknowledged the existence of underlying subcultures in policing. In contrast, the degree of impact the subcultures had on each participant varied depending on the personal, professional, and agency characteristics. Additionally, reporting officers associated ethical decision-making to one's own personal value system and their ability to use such characteristics to combat the organizational internal influence as they carried out their day-to-day responsibilities. Below are the voices of several participants as they responded to six of the set of 21 questions pertaining to organizational subculture's influence on ethical decision-making in policing. The six questions were:

1. What does police organizational culture mean to you?
2. What does police subculture mean to you?
3. Describe what would be the ideal structure of a police organization.
4. Describe your experience navigating police workplace culture.
5. Some people would say assimilating to workplace culture is the only way to survive and move up in law enforcement what would you say?
6. Who do you believe officers identify as setting the standards in law enforcement organizations and why?

I posed these questions to discover attitudes and opinions regarding how officers perceive organizational culture, how one works within the established environment, and who an officer viewed to both establish and model organizational standards. Responses pertaining to organizational culture associated organizational culture to paramilitary in

comparison with stringent rank and file reporting structures. Most agreed that while levels of rank will vary dependent on agency size, type and needs of the community served, a chief would represent the top of the executive tier and is perceived to be the one who creates the standard/expectations to be executed throughout the organization. While it was understood among the respondents that the chief set the organizational standard, responses also identified middle managers and other informal leaders as those who officers identify as modeling the standard, teaching those under their command how the job is executed, what is acceptable conduct/behavior, and the importance of following a direct command.

Participant 0820, a retired law enforcement executive with over 25 years of service from a municipal medium size department, describing organizational culture said, "There is the community culture and that's how the community perceives the organizational culture. Then there's the administrative culture, and then there is the operational culture. Administrative is how the organization operates and the commitment to community service and the operational goals and objectives of the agency. The operational is the culture that exists at every level within the organization."

Participant 0920, a line level officer with over 10 years of service for a large municipal agency, described the culture in law enforcement as, "the overarching understanding of the way the organization functions. The policy, the development of those policies, and the line level execution of those policies" and participant 0220, with over 10 years of law enforcement service in campus law enforcement, described who

officers identified as organizational leaders as, "basically first there is a rank structure so when I think about the organizational culture, I think about the formal way police is set up, like the Chief/Sherriff, Assistant Chief, Deputy or Majors, Captain, Lieutenant. Sergeant, Corporals and below."

Respondents described experiences regarding socialization, culture influence and the navigation of police workplace culture as first being grounded in one's own values, attitudes, beliefs, ethical understanding, and integrity. Officers described their professional experiences on the job as influenced by others. Many described accounts of other officers' navigation through their tenure as less complicated as they often assimilated to subculture practices to get along, to be respected, liked and most importantly to remain safe while on duty.

Participant 0220 described the following personal experience:

I was a new officer on midnight shift. It was understood when you're on midnight shift at two o'clock in the morning you find a place to park and sleep until the end of your tour-of-duty. I didn't want to do that because I was new, and I wanted to show that I was ready to work. One night I drove around and saw a suspicious person. When I approached the person, they took off running. I was in a dark unknown place with no backup. I knew no one would come to my aid because they told me not to be out fishing around in the first place. Needless to say, on the next worknight at two o'clock I found myself a place to park and sleep until the end of my shift.

It is understood that while personal integrity and ethical behavior is vital, so too is getting along, as trust and respect of others is often what gets an officer out of a life-or-death situation. Participant 0520 described organizational culture and the pressures of assimilation driven by "the ideals and values that make up the organization itself and the people that work with the agency and how they carry out their duties." Finally, when asked if assimilating to workplace culture is the only way to survive and move up in law enforcement, 69% of the respondents agreed assimilating to some degree is necessary to obtain the professional rewards, whether this be as simple as shift preference or as great as a promotion.

Subculture in policing exists at every operational level. Subcultures are defined as, "A group within society whose behaviors, norms, and values differ in some distinct ways from the dominant culture" (Dictionary, 2021). The dominant culture in a law enforcement organization is the culture described above. This culture is established by the leaders of the organization and guided by established policy, laws and/or government provisions.

In this study, I defined subculture to be internal social groups, formed by like attitudes, values, and beliefs. Often referred to as cliques by respondents, subcultures were viewed to be hidden or entrenched within the dominate cultures representing the internal workings of an agency and the actual way policies are carried out. When asked to articulate their personal understanding of subculture and how subculture has impacted their workplace success, below are a few of the responses received:

Participant 1120 described organizational subculture as "basically how you perceived your agency to be and the values you bring to your organization. It's like a reflection of your organization. It's like how you have been trained, the codes you go by and stuff like that" while participant 1320 described subculture as, "The norms and values within each agency. So that would be unique to the internal workings of the agency. That can extend from agency to agency." Participant 1320 also described the impact of subculture on his professional progression as follows:

That's a great question. I think this really affects people in larger agencies. I can recall when I worked for an agency in the mid-west. I can recall we had sixty-seven Lieutenants and in trying to get promoted I found you were competing with many people and the decision tended to be based upon established relationships, some known and others unknown, that often got people promoted. In my experience subculture impacted my career both positively and sometimes negatively. The reason why is because in the larger agency I only had one or two close friends in an agency of 1,100 officers. I wasn't known to hang out at all the social events. I think my distance to the subculture halted me because those off-duty relationships were void. So yes, I do think it had an impact on my trajectory, but I was ok with that. I didn't feel like I needed to substitute who I was to get a little further quicker.

Participant 0720, a female middle management federal law enforcement officer, described her experience with subculture influence as a,

Good impact. Again, it goes back to the ideal structure. The departments I've been in it wasn't all bad; there was some good. It goes back to leadership; that's what I love. I would say I experienced people who are teachers, not those who are trying to get me to come to their side. I have had a good experience. Subculture falls back on attitude.

To explore the attitudes, opinions and experiences surrounding one's understanding of ethical violations, I posed the following questions:

1. What does ethics mean to you?
2. What does integrity mean to you?

Respondents discussed one's personal value system integrated with organizational expectations, often referred to as those policies, procedures, law and ethical codes of conduct. Respondents likened their understanding of ethical standard to the inherent fiber of a person's character. Participant 0620, a law enforcement officer with over 10 years of campus law enforcement experience, referred to it as "your morals and doing things the proper way. The old saying doing things right and proper even if no one is watching."

Participant 0920, a municipal officer with over 10 years' experience, said:

Ethics in the colloquial form is doing what's right because it's right even when no one is looking. In other words, my motivation for doing what I do is to do the right thing. Ethics will tell me doing the right thing is not so I can avoid jail, or not so I can avoid some sort of civil penalty or my name being in the newspaper, but I'm doing it because I'm attempting to treat human beings the right way. The policy helps me understand how to do it right. Ethics tells me to do it right.

Further respondents expressed that policies and procedures merely provide the framework for an officer to work within, but their integrity, morals, and understanding of ethics is one of the factors influencing the decision-making process.

To understand how officers processed ethical violations, I asked the following question:

1. Some people would say ethical violations in policing are accepting free food, what would you tell them?

Respondents across the demographic spectrum viewed ethical violations in degrees of severity and often deferred to policy as the deciding factor between poor or acceptable conduct. Of the 13 responses, 31% of the respondents disagreed that accepting free food was an ethical violation; however, in contrast, 54% indicated the decision regarding conduct should be determined by what agency policy allows. Two respondents found the behavior to be unethical and 15% articulated the need to better understand the intent of the gesture first before making a judgement call. Successful policing is executed through positive collaborations, community relationships and community perception. (Annelies De Schrijver, 2015). The United States Department of Justice Community Relations Tool Kit states:

Strong relationships of mutual trust between police agencies and the communities they serve are critical to maintaining public safety and effective policing. Police officials rely on the cooperation of community members to provide information about crime in their neighborhoods, and to work with the police to devise solutions to crime and disorder problems. Similarly, community members'

willingness to trust the police depends on whether they believe that police actions reflect community values and incorporate the principles of procedural justice and legitimacy. Policing should be through cooperation and not by force" (Justice, 2016).

An officer is always held to a higher standard and is less likely to receive an exception when found to have made poor decisions. Additionally, trust and cooperation can be shaped by the perception of both individual officers and of the agency overall when the conduct of personnel is perceived to be unethical. Thus, the purpose for the above question and the need to explore how an officer views degrees of ethics and conduct and how this association is influenced by the organizational subcultures.

In contrast to the question above, which is often viewed as a frivolous policy violation not worth the disruption potentially caused by punishment, I asked the following questions regarding gross misconduct:

1. How did the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis make you feel?
2. How did the behavior of the observing officers in the George Floyd killing make you feel?

Respondents expressed both anger and sadness. Expressions of anger were based on knowing police training and/or an agency's policy would not permit such an egregious act. They were angry because the act of one set the profession as a whole back, destroying community relationships and positive perceptions. Additionally, it should be noted respondents' disgust was conflicted for the following reasons:

1. Respondents questioned whether policy permitted the act.

2. Apparent underlying subculture present that said we do this all the time, what makes this different.
3. Rank and tenure of the officers involved and the reality of their breaking chain of command going against the informal leaders and subcultures.
4. Reserving judgement not wanting to "Monday night quarterback" an officer's action.

Participant 0120, a police executive of more than 10 years, stated he was, "Upset at the officers specifically more upset at the subculture of the agency" and felt, "It's our responsibility to make our agencies better and if you find those few that refuse to understand, then we need to find ways to remove them from the profession. Not the organization, the profession." Participant 0620 stated she was:

Pissed but ummm kind of quiet in the aspect of giving an opinion and it's not because I didn't think the officer was wrong, but I don't like "Monday night quarterbacking another officers' actions. I don't like to judge because I wasn't there. I was upset he did it. I think it was a bad look for our profession, but I don't like to "Monday night quarterback" another officer's actions.

The discussion topic elicited the following dialogue:

Participant 0620: "I was upset that no one showed any overt act of trying to say let's stop, let's check, let's see. Of course, I don't know what happened, but I try to keep those comments of judging officers because what I've learned over the

years is that people take those comments and use them against you. I know what I would have done, and I take those situations and try to learn from them.”

Researcher: “If you had to analyze the culture of that department based on that incident what would you say.”

Respondent: "I think it's probably a department that is used to adversity and dealing with adversity with a stronghold. I think it's one of those departments where we try to nip in the bud immediately what the issue is at all costs."

Researcher: Do you see subcultures in policing as a necessary evil?

Respondent: "I guess you can look at it like that because if you never had anything that contradicted the norm then you wouldn't be able to deal with the challenge.”

Finally, to further enhance the exploration of the study's topic, respondents were asked to provide feedback pertaining to discretion and the decision-making process.

Discretion in policing is defined as "The exercise of individual choice or judgement concerning possible courses of action" (Cox, 2014, p. 227). Discretion provides a degree of autonomy in a police officer's decision-making process, and the consequences of the misappropriation of discretion can be an open door to biased enforcement that may result in injury, death, or simply bad press. Lack of resources and manpower require officers to utilize their discretion often because they can't be everywhere all the time to resolve issues. An officer's decisions and discretionary choices are typically influenced by the following factors:

1. The law

2. Department policy
3. Political expectations
4. The situation or setting and;
5. The occupational culture in which they operate (Cox, 2014, p. 228)

Respondents identified personal demographics such as rank, gender and race as additional influences on discretion and decision-making in the policing. The questions shown below supported the exploration of subculture influence on decision-making and provided additional considerations impacting the importance of monitoring the climate of subcultures in policing.

1. Some people would say specific demographics such as rank, gender, and race influence decision-making, what would you say?
2. What is your opinion regarding how discretion in law enforcement impacts an officer's ethical decision [-making?
3. Can you describe a time where a decision-making dilemma was caused by agency policy and subculture standards colliding?

Officers surveyed found discretion as necessary but a potential breeding ground for illicit conduct. Participant 0120 stated the following:

I believe discretion puts your kind of at odds with the policy because policy and procedure are going to be straight forward. Discretion comes into play a lot with traffic citations. The policy says to give them a ticket, but discretion allows an

officer to disregard that. Discretion can be a struggle for some. It can be a source of controversy.

Participant 0220 described discretion as:

Something I hope that is never taken away. Sometimes you do things for people because it's the right thing to do even though something bad may have happened. For example, I've stopped people who were drunker than "Kuta Brown." I have called people to come to pick them up. I've personally parked a person's car and driven the person home. That is my discretion. I do this because it's my discretion and I'm not a hypocrite. I've done that numerous times. I don't think it's unethical to treat someone the way you would want to be treated. That's where I stand with that. If I got caught up in a situation and I didn't hurt anyone that's gonna be my response.

Participant 0520 stated:

The use of discretion can be compromising and then it brings into other questions of ethics where people do things in the name of discretion but racially bias. For example, you stop two cars for speeding, and they are going the same miles per hour, but you apply discretion and give the white driver a break but a citation to the black driver. The appearance comes across as bias, but the officer's opinion is, I can write a ticket to whoever I want to write a ticket to. So, there could be some ethical questions. I've seen where two people committing the same crime receive different outcomes and the officer said, "well I didn't do it the last time, but this

time I'm going to do it and it's in the name of ethics or I mean discretion, I'm sorry.

Participant 0920 described discretion as “The tool given to an officer to apply leniency. This tool can be the front door so to speak to discriminative behavior and if not monitored it can lead to problems for an officer and agency.” The majority of respondents, 92%, agreed race, gender and rank influence decision-making and described subculture as an added influencer within each of the categories. Participant 1020 stated, “They are absolutely correct because those things impact decision making in every organization. We make decisions based on our own personnel experiences. Rank matters, life experiences and all those things help to shape how we make our decisions.” Respondents also described their own personal experience dealing with subculture influence, discretion, and decision-making as situational, driven by knowledge and understanding of organizational standards, policies, and subculture expectations coupled with their own personal value system, attitudes and beliefs. Participant 1220 described a personal experience where dilemma collided with subculture standards as follows:

There was a pursuit policy that was in place, and the subculture during this time was very specific on when the supervisor could terminate a pursuit. At the end of a pursuit, the individual being pursued crashed into two police vehicles and crashed into a school bus. The suspect was brought into custody, but because of some dashcam footage, some officers were prosecuted as a result of the incident. The incident resulted in excessive use of force. The problem was it was only the

line-level officers prosecuted but not the supervisors who were actively involved in the decision-making process of that incident. The subculture established allowed conduct that wasn't in line with department policy.

Participant 0820 described his personal experience in this way:

When I was on the east side, we had a couple of officers, a black guy, who got hooked up with a guy from another department. From 8-4 they partnered up. We had a lady native American, that had a bad background, beautiful but bad family. She was pulled over and they arrested her. The white officer of the pair allowed her to have oral sex in exchange to be let go. She complied, performed on both. She later filed a complaint. They asked her why she complained, and she said, I know what I am, but they are the cops. I expect better than that. I was a union rep, and I get a call from the officer, and he explained what happened. Later I was called in by the Captain, who reminded me there is no attorney-client privilege and told me to tell him what the officer said. I was torn. I didn't know what to say, I told him that the officer said, "that they fucked up." The Captain questioned me further but all I said was that the officers said they fucked up. The Captain told other people what I said, and I was later labeled a snitch, and I was pissed. I was very angry. He put me in that situation and used his authority and the policy to do it. It was very tough for me. People who were like-minded people supported me. It made me question the culture of the department.

My friend wanted me to leave the department with him because of the internal racism he was experiencing. The two officers ultimately were terminated. The

black guy ended up getting out of law enforcement altogether and the white guy ended up being a police chief for another agency.

I manually conducted data analysis using an inductive coding process. The first round of coding involved the creation of Apriori codes for each question. The assigned codes provided broad categories to associate anticipated responses based upon the researcher's pre-existing knowledge and the established interview questions. The chart below displays a sample of the Apriori codes established for four of the participants.

Table 2

Apriori Code Table

1320 Male Executive Employed 10+ YOS municipal small	Perception, Power imbalance, rewards and punishment	How did the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis make you feel?
0420 Male Executive 10= YOS employed municipal large	Values	What does integrity mean to you?
0720 Female middle management 10 YOS Fed. Police Large	Perception, Interaction, Power balance, Incentives, Contributing factors	What does police organizational culture mean to you?
0920 Male Line officer employed 10+ YOS municipal large	Perception, Contributing factors, Power Imbalance, rewards punishment	What does police subculture mean to you?

The assigned Apriori codes focused primarily on categories of perception, power imbalance, rewards and punishment, experience, values, and contributing factors. The first round of coding conducted provided a broad overall depiction of categories across data responses, loosely revealing what might be expected in the coding rounds to follow.

I encountered no unusual circumstances during the initial round of coding, and the selected method of coding was most appropriate to predict categories pertaining to each of the questions.

The second round of coding established open codes, often referred to as tentative labels, for each response. This coding method aided helped establish an initial understanding of the frequency of core concepts from responses and emerging themes across the responses. Additionally, the second round loosely revealed contrast attitudes and opinions regarding the concepts presented, such as perception of ethics, integrity, organizational structure and discretion in decision-making and peer relationships. The third round of coding established more defined categories extracted from line-by-line analysis of each of the participant's responses. The fourth round of coding identified emerging themes and patterns derived from the frequency of categorical labels assigned, creating a narrative representing the thoughts, attitudes, and opinions, which were later used to interpret findings and to make suggested recommendations. Finally, the coding table consisted of a fifth element, which provided a participant's excerpt detailing the participant response in their own words.

Description of Emergent Codes and Themes

The described coding methods were appropriate for the qualitative phenomenological study and aided in capturing thematic responses, patterns, and associations across the participants' responses. There were numerous codes identified and associated categories established. The major categories established were police culture,

codes of conduct, police subculture, policy discretion and decision-making influence.

These categories and evidence of the established categories are as follows.

Table 3

Participant Data Table Excerpt

Category	Meaning	Evidence from the data
Police Culture and Organizational Structure Codes: Hierarchy Bureaucracy Chain of Command Values Purpose and Responsibility Perception Systemic influence	How is organizational culture understood in policing?	Police culture is paramilitary in structure and operation. Power and authority are perceived to be held by that at the highest level of organization and by those most near to those who deliver the services. Those in those position are the decision-makers and hold the power and authority regarding rewards and punishments.
Codes of Conduct Codes: Ethics Value system Rules/Policy Organization standard Belief system Principals	How do officers perceive code of conduct and who do they perceive sets these standards?	Police understand codes of conduct to be a set of standards set by both the organization and one's own value system. Officers describe ethical conduct and integrity as doing the right thing even when no one is looking.
Policy & Discretion Standards Procedure Direction Behavior	How does policy and discretion impact an officer's decisions.	Officers perceive policy as a guideline to execute the delivery of services. Officers see policies as a guide to doing the job not being an ethical person. Officers see discretion as

<p>Decision-making, influence and dilemma.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perception Hierarchy Integrity Subculture 	<p>What are the influences of decision-making dilemma</p>	<p>necessary providing an option to deviate from the exact rule but leaving opportunities that could create ethical dilemma. Officers associated this problem occurring more often among those whose own personal integrity is sub-standard further stating when not addressed is a detriment to the agency overall.</p> <p>Officers find decision-making dilemma as situations where subculture standard expectations, practice and personal integrity, cross policy and organizational expectations.</p>
<p>Police subculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bias Social Influences Accountability Demographics Informal leadership Supervisors 	<p>What is the perception of the existence and influence of subcultures in policing?</p>	<p>Officers perceive subculture in policing relevant, necessary, driven by personal relationships of like people sharing attitudes and beliefs. Officers perceive subculture to be the pulse of an organization, led by middle management and informal leaders.</p>

Study participants expressively articulated the existence of organizational undertones that are influential to an officer both personally and professionally. Evidence demonstrated the association of the above listed categories as those characteristics that both perpetuate and support organizational subcultures. Frequency of emergent codes and

themes across responses also characterized that an officer perceives degree of ethical dilemma and behavior as falling into one of the following categories:

- Absolute
- Gray
- Inconclusive
- None

Absolute were violations officers associated with those that explicitly violated policy and were the most extreme ethical violations, such as those causing significant injury or death of another. Gray area classifications of ethical violations in decision-making were those where subculture practice and organizational policy collided. Inconclusive classifications were categorized as those decision-making situations where officers preferred not to judge and often used discretion as the vehicle of justification for the decision made. Finally, "none" were those decisions officers perceived as clearly made, guided, and found to meet policy standard and organization expectation.

Qualities of Discrepancy

Data across the responses demonstrated similarities and differences significant to the established categories and themes. The chart below is a sample of the differences and similarities present within the participant's responses.

Table 4

Participant Data Response Themes

Themes	Similarities	Differences
Police Culture & Organizational Structure	Police culture is paramilitary in structure and operation. Power and authority are perceived to be held by that at the highest level of organization and by those most near to those who deliver the services. Those in those position are the decision-makers and hold the power and authority regarding rewards and punishments.	How the external stakeholders perceive the organizational culture and structure should be.
Codes of Conduct Codes:	Police understand codes of conduct to be a set of standards set by both the organization and one's own value system. Officers describe ethical conduct and integrity as doing the right thing even when no one is looking.	Code of conduct drive unethical decisions, perpetuate negative subcultures and bad practices. Some argued polices create a platform to work around the rule.
Policy& Discretion	Officers perceive policy as a guideline to execute the delivery of services. Officers see policies as a guide to doing the job not being an ethical person. Officers see discretion as necessary providing an option to deviate from the exact rule but leaving opportunities that could create ethical dilemma. Officers associated this problem occurring more often among those whose own personal integrity is sub-standard further stating when not addressed is a detriment to the agency overall.	As shown above the same difference was established under policy and discretion. Officers found policy and discretion in contrast as driving unethical decisions, perpetuate negative subcultures and bad practices. Some argued polices create a platform to work around the rule. That if there were no policies there would be no standards to break but rather opportunities to increase creativity in how service is delivered.
Decision-making, influence and dilemma.	Officers find decision-making dilemma as situations where subculture standard expectations, organizational and subculture practice and personal integrity, cross policy and organizational expectations.	Officers associate decision-making, influence and dilemma to personal and professional demographics such as race, gender, tenure, and rank.

Police subculture

Officers perceive subculture in policing relevant, necessary, driven by personal relationships of like people sharing attitudes and beliefs. Officers perceive subculture to be the pulse of an organization, led by middle management and informal leaders.

In contrast officer's establish subcultures don't always represent the negative underbelly of an agency, but rather can present opportunities for those cultures to present positive acts and/or processes carried out by a subset of an agency.

The experiences captured from the personal interviews solidifies organizational culture, expectation of conduct, decision-making, and discretion as major themes extrinsic to both the existence of subcultures and the association of these subcultures to an officer's perception of how he or she matriculates through their professional law enforcement career.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

I used manual transcription to capture the responses of the participant interviews. Member checking defined as participant or respondent validation was employed to ensure what the participant conveyed was accurately notated for the record (Liz Birt, 2016). Participants were given the opportunity to review the transcriptions, thus reinforcing the credibility of the data findings.

Transferability

To achieve opportunities for implementation of transferability or adjustments to be applied, a detailed description of the research problem, question, and significance was given. Additionally, as recommended in "Qualitative Content Analysis: A focus on trustworthiness" the researcher provided a robust description of each participant's

experiences, interview method, setting of interviews and sampling strategies employed (Satu Elo, 2014).

Dependability

To enhance the degree of dependability of the research study, concise rationale describing the alignment of the data collection methods with the purpose of the study was thoroughly described (Cope D. G., 2014). The data screening tool selected and prepared to analyze participant responses was purposefully aligned and consistent with recommend methods of analysis for phenomenological qualitative research (Guillen, 2018). Finally, the dissertation committee and Walden University methodologist reviewed and critiqued the selected research methodology and data screening tools. Two consulting sessions with Walden University's Center for Research Quality resulted in Dr. Morris D. Bidjorano reviewing and confirming the appropriateness and alignment of the selected screening tool for the research study.

Confirmability

Throughout my research, I maintained a reflective journal notating my own thoughts, feelings, attitudes, opinions and personal bias regarding the subject matter. In addition, I used thematic bracketing to assess and monitor my attitudes and opinions to ensuring confirmability of the research study (Cope, 2014).

Summary

Following the careful and strategic analysis of the lived expectances of 13 law enforcement professionals possessing varying demographic backgrounds, attitudes and opinions, the following can be concluded:

Overwhelmingly, participants acknowledged the existence of underlying subcultures in policing.

- In contrast, the degree of impact the subcultures had on each participant varied depending on the personal, professional, and agency characteristics.
- Reporting officers associated ethical decision-making to one's own personal value system and their ability to use such characteristics to combat the organizational internal influences as they carried out their day-to-day responsibilities.
- A distinct and direct theme indicating power imbalance and perception inequities were found between ethical aptitude, decision-making, policy compliance understanding and that of an agencies internal subculture's own attitudes and opinions, and.
- Finally, the association between an officer's perception of who sets the standards coupled with who influences the rewards and punishment was found to be a subculture stimulus, adding to the decision-making considerations for officers.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to call attention to potential organizational subcultures embedded within agencies and to determine if those embedded cultures

inflicted a sense of loyalty and/or comradery impacting how an officer's decision-making process was executed. The presence of subcultures are fluid throughout law enforcement organizational culture; however, the extent that subculture's presence plays on individual ethical decision-making has not been determined. Evidence supports that influence does exist and the decisions officers make are motivated by other extrinsic components such as those classified as rewards and/or punishment. Additionally, officers associate one's own personal value system as the basic foundation to decision-making precedent to subculture expectation but agree an officer with a substandard value system and lack of ethical understanding creates a breeding place for like attitudes and opinions among others to create negative subcultures, thus impacting practices and service delivery.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of police officers experiencing the impact of organizational subcultures on ethical decision-making in policing. Through this study, I sought to identify a better understanding regarding an officer's perception of those underlying subcultures, the influence subcultures possess and how organizational leadership, ethical conduct and decision-making are understood among officers. "In the wake of recent incidents involving police use of force and other issues, the legitimacy of the police have been questioned in many communities" (Justice, 2016, p. 2). Research supports a direct connection to successful policing through positive police and community relationships (Brough, 2016). "These strong relationships of mutual trust between police agencies and the communities they serve are critical to maintaining public safety and effective policing" (Justice, 2016, p. 2). To accomplish this goal there must be a joint understanding coupled with a degree of respect that is reciprocated between both members of the community and the police, without, the ability to fight crime becomes exponentially difficult and dangerous to both the officer and members of the community (Justice, 2016).

Using community-oriented policing programs to assess the opinions and attitudes of communities and stakeholders has served as a useful mechanism to both gauge and understand the vitality of the public's perception of police. However, the problem suggests lack of knowledge regarding the health of the internal organizational culture of

the police department may substantially impact both an officer's behavior and his or her execution of policing services. Edwin Sutherland's Differential Theory and Ronald Aker's Social Learning Theory were used as the theoretical foundation for the study. Differential Theory suggests behaviors positive or negative are learned and reinforced through interactions and the associated frequency of those interactions. Ronald Akers builds upon this theory by suggesting the reinforcement behind human behavior as often influenced by anticipated rewards, punishments, and/or observations of such (Anthony, 2018). Data collected revealed the acknowledgement of the existence of subcultures and the influence the subcultures placed on relationships and peer socialization, interpretation of ethics and career progression, bridging a gap in literature that addressed organizational integrity and ethical policing.

Research Question

The research question that I sought to answer was: How does organizational subcultures impact ethical decision-making in policing?

Purpose and Nature of the Study

The identified purpose and nature of the study explored through the experiences of a selected group of law enforcement officer's lived experiences the connectivity between a police department's organizational subculture's and an officer's ethical conduct and associated decision-making. As previously stated, the community perception of a law enforcement agency is driven by the conduct of internal personnel and the relationships built with external stakeholders. These components aid in effective policing and

community safety. The gap in knowledge however limits comprehension of the role the internal health of an agency plays on each part. Literature supports awareness of ethics alone and the characteristics of ethical people and the assessment of such. (Unnithan, 2015) This knowledge has been applied to creating and monitoring hiring practices, training programs and policy development in law enforcement; however, there continues to be a lack of knowledge surrounding organizational subcultures and the systemic influence of such on the personal behaviors of police officers.

Summary and Interpretation of Findings

Using the theoretical framework of Social Learning Theory and Differential Theory under current the operations of most police agencies, an agency's organization is graded on its overall ability to execute policing services. Further, while ethical standards and those expectations are created by the agency, the violations of them are often viewed by agencies as situational, isolated and independent of the agency and the standard expectation. Social Learning Theory and Differential Theory propose behavior as learned and that learned behavior is predicated upon the frequency of rewards and punishments and one's social setting combined with the influence of those social relationships. From this study the following themes and associations were captured:

Officers acknowledge a pervasive presence of subcultures within police agencies. This culture is referred to as the subculture and separate from that established organizational culture found to be applicable to all regardless of rank, tenure and/or any other personal demographic. Additionally, subcultures were referred to as cliques, with

hidden undertones and representative of how policy and procedure are both understood and executed.

Officers perceive an agency's chief executive officer as the one responsible for setting the organizational standard; however, the participants agreed that those seen as informal leaders, such as mid-level supervisors, influence how those expectations are understood.

Officers understood that allowing for individual situational discretion was a potential open door to dilemma in ethical decision-making and often influenced by those informal leaders that make up the organizational subculture.

Participants' personal accounts of dilemma referenced their own personal integrity rather than the culture of the organization as the cornerstone of making ethical decisions. However, participants acknowledged their observation of other's unethical decision-making, which allowed them to be influenced by pervasive organizational subcultures. When I asked the participants about a time when they were faced with a dilemma where policy collided with subculture expectation, Participant 1320 stated:

There was a situation where I was in charge of the plainclothes unit and a particular commander who was less than happy that I got this position over a white counterpart that she wanted. Information regarding illegal activity to take place was provided but with no direction as to how to handle the situation. She said I'm giving you this information you do what you want to with it. When I looked at this, a senior officer giving me a loose order, I think the conundrum in this was that the senior officer compromised her integrity by assigning me the task." I took the information and executed a sting operation that was successful

and resulted in charges and arrests however the outcome of that particular incident did impact me because it was at that point that I knew that there was a target on my back. There were other instances whereby this commander tried to ensure failure. Eventually, I requested to leave that unit out of fear of career sabotage.

Participants agreed that because they led their professional careers using their own personal integrity, professional peer relationships were sometimes strained or non-existent thus for some prolonging and/or preventing professional rewards such as promotion. Participant 0620 described the following:

I think what I've experienced in law enforcement is not dealing with particular problems, but instead moving the problems around. In my younger years I will say that my not conforming when things did happen kept me from moving up.

Officer responses viewed subcultures as being potentially bad and good dependent on those making up the subculture. Additionally, participants described subcultures present within the different ranks, by gender, age/tenure and job assignment.

Officers understood ethical violation differently. When presented with an example of accepting gratuities, 53% of the participants indicated unethical labeling should be guided solely by what policy dictates while the remaining 47% of the respondents believed the label of unethical should be dependent upon the intent of the gratuity. Additionally, when I asked them how they felt about the death of George Floyd, they all expressed anger. They explicitly viewed the actions of Derek Chauvin as a clear violation of any training

and/or policy; however, officers' further expressed concern regarding culture of the agency, integrity of the observing officers and their initial unwillingness to question another officer's actions in that moment.

Officers viewed established policies and procedures as those guidelines set to dictate behavior and decision-making. However, participants noted policies do not guide ethical behavior and/or decision-making, but rather outline what would be considered right or wrong. "Please introduce the following quote:

For officers who have poor ethics then policy and procedure are not going to impact them. Then you have other officers who are just not going to violate policy because they don't want to get in trouble. I don't feel the policy and procedures have the impact it's the ethics and values the officer brings to the table.

In conclusion, subcultures are predicated and grounded upon established relationships, and those components can and will influence an officer's decision-making. However, the surveyed data pool suggests an officer's personal characteristics, namely their integrity and moral aptitude, precede that of the organizational influence and will supersede subculture standards, policy, and/or other loyalties when faced with a decision-making dilemma.

Limitations

As stated in Chapter 2 in the subsection Limitations, the identified limitations included the study's sample size, potential for bias and confidentiality and/or opportunity for participant harm. I specifically selected data collection methods to address smaller

data pool samples and to obtain comprehensive and in-depth lived experiences from the participants. As a tenured administrative law enforcement professional, I understood the potential for bias my involvement would add to the research process. To mitigate such, I employed the following procedures:

- Each interview was conducted outside of the workplace and confirmation as my role in the research process as neutral was communicated both verbally and in writing.
- All questions were general, open-ended, and not specific regarding any subject related incidences.
- Member-checking and journaling techniques were employed and;
- No employees from the researcher's place of employment were invited to participate.

Delimitations

Identified delimitations occurred with the inability to survey participants regarding specific personal acts of unethical behavior. As a result, I chose to establish a set of questions focusing primarily on attitudes and opinions regarding ethics, subculture influence, organizational structure, decision-making, and discretion. To increase research participation the selected line of questioning removed the threat of harm to the participant while increasing the chance of truthful and in-depth responses.

Recommendations

From the results of the study the following recommendations should be considered:

- Additional research exploring the perception of ethical conduct and how this is understood among a law enforcement officers.
- Additional research exploring the administrative knowledge and understanding of how subcultures are formed and what perpetuates their existence in law enforcement.
- Additional research exploring specific decision-making situations and the associated influences.
- Additional research exploring rank structure, influence and decision-making in policing.

As previously stated, the study results suggested overwhelmingly the existence of subcultures and their influence on conduct and decision-making. The data also suggested when dealing with officers who possess a high degree of integrity, ethical and moral standard the underlying negative influence would be minimal. With that said, agencies should be held accountable to not simply assessing the integrity of the employee upon hire but also the integrity of the employees post hire. This can be accomplished through periodic employee integrity assessments, implementation of professional standard early warning systems, and mandated civilian oversight commissions. Finally, the research findings solidified law enforcement culture as subject to the communities they serve, size

and type. Thus, to appropriately understand the culture of an organization, "law enforcement leaders must first determine the desired culture they wish to instill, compare it with the existing culture to decide on the changes needed, create dissatisfaction with the current culture and support for the desired culture" (Anthony, 2018, p. 93).

Implications for Social Change

Literature supports the premise that to effectively police and maintain the safety of police personnel and the communities they serve; positive community relationships and perception of police and police agencies is required. Further literature suggests the need for police agencies to commit to community-oriented policing concepts that promote relationship building and administrative concepts addressing operational standards and personnel management. (Cox, 2014). To implement and maintain such relationships requires law enforcement leaders to have both an accurate pulse on an agency's personnel and the needs of the associated service area. Therefore, it is necessary to monitor organizational culture as an essential part of staying abreast of an agency's performance and the perception of their performance. While it is clear the integrity of an agency starts with those who serve within, the maintenance of such becomes the responsibility of the organization. The evolution and inclusion of this concept creates a new outlook on police culture and accountability, thus legitimizing police activities and consequently establishing safe communities.

Conclusion

" The culture of society and police is changing rapidly driven by technology and succeeding generations. There is an ever-widening chasm between the police and the citizens they serve created by these changes" (Anthony, 2018, p. 95). In addition, Mills (2003) said, "there is a sense in which the police service is seen as a beleaguered institution which has lost a clear sense of its identity, is subject to the political ideologies of the day and is seen to serve too many masters" (p. 335). This degradation of the relationship between police and the communities they serve requires a shift of focus toward the health of organizational culture in policing to ensure police agencies are prepared to meet the challenges of the times, influence organizational accountability at every level, and change the trajectory of police culture and organizational structure in the years to come.

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