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Police Officer Aggression During Police-Civilian Encounters and Effect on Civilian Perception

James Aaron Plank
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College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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James Aaron Plank

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Walden University
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Abstract

Police Officer Aggression During Police-Civilian Encounters and Effect on Civilian

Perception

by

James Aaron Plank

MA, Texas A&M University-Central Texas, 2015

BA, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, 2000

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

November 2021

Abstract

Trust in the police by the public is the cornerstone of public safety. A lack of trust in the

police discourages citizens from reporting criminal behavior, leading to increased crime

rates. A lack of trust can be the result of inappropriate actions taken by officers in police-

civilian encounters, as perceived by the citizen. Although increased professional

standards and training have been implemented in police departments across the U.S.,

researchers have not demonstrated how aggressive police officer behavior affects the

civilian perception of the officer's actions. The purpose of this study was to determine if

there is a relationship between police officer aggression and an individual's perception of

the officer's actions using institutional analysis and development framework. A

quantitative nonexperimental design was used to examine a secondary dataset of a

random sample of 7,417 respondents who had indicated that they had been stopped by the

police while driving. A logistic regression analysis indicated that there was a statistically

significant relationship between the officer shouting and threatening arrest and the

respondent believing those actions to be unnecessary. The officer cursing and kicking or

hitting was not found to be statistically significant. Scholarly implications include

producing a research design that employs the use of independently collected data,

allowing the researcher to measure other perceptions of respondents to police actions.

Policy implications include police administrators actively monitoring the use of

aggression by their officers in order to improve police-community relations. Implications

for positive social change include increased training for accommodative communication

for new and current officers.

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Dedication

I dedicate this academic achievement to my wife, Brianna, my children, Jacob, Marissa, Logan, Isabelle, and Lily, and to my mother, Donna. You have all given me the motivation and support to accomplish my educational and professional goals. Thank you for believing in me.

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I want to thank Dr. Marisa Bryant and Dr. Malanye Smith for their guidance throughout this endeavor. I also want to thank my wife, Brianna, for her overwhelming support throughout this journey.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

iv

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The concept of a professional police force that displays the best of ethics began in 1829 with a gentleman named Sir Robert Peel in London, England. His idea that the police should have increased training and standards became the theme from which the Metropolitan Police Service originated from (Sims, 2019). Recent and past events involving police encounters with civilians have consistently been the cause of longstanding tensions between the police and the public (Parry, Moule, and Dario, 2017; Peyton, Sierra-Arevalo, and Rand, 2019; Shjarbak, Pyrooz, Wolfe, & Decker, 2017), requiring a solution for police legitimacy to remain intact. Due to the nature of police work, aggression, and the use of force, either by threat or action, are necessary in certain instances where other measures have failed (National Institute of Justice, 2019). Some of these interactions have gone wrong, such as the arrest and death of Eric Garner in New York City in 2014, staining the reputation of the men and women of law enforcement (Ramirez, Wraight, Kilmister, and Perkins, 2019; Shjarbak, Pyrooz, Wolfe, & Decker, 2017). This problem is compounded by the fact that video recording has become more accessible through the advent of cell phone technology, with 85% of US citizens possessing cell phone cameras (Pew Research Center, 2018). Videos of police encounters can be recorded instantly and uploaded on social media platforms, gaining national attention and condemnation of police tactics (Sandhu and Haggerty, 2017). The ramifications of a negative police encounter are far-reaching (Lichtbau, 2016; Parry, Moule, and Dario, 2017; Peyton, Sierra-Arevalo, and Rand, 2019; Ramirez, Wraight,

Kilmister, and Perkins, 2019; Sandhu and Haggerty, 2017; Zercoe 2017). As trust by the public in American law enforcement institutions diminishes within multiple communities (Brunson, 2007; Zercoe, 2017), police administrators must consider new approaches to police academy training that address appropriate use of aggressive and assertive tactics by their officers.

High-profile videos of police encounters with civilians that have gone horribly wrong have made their mark on current police training and policy. Zercoe (2017) argues that no other event has had more of an impact on law enforcement than the rise of video technologies. Many departments are requiring their officers to wear body-worn cameras so that first-hand recordings of police encounters with civilians are made and kept as evidence (Catchcart, 2017; International Association of Chiefs of Police [IACP], 2014b). This ability to keep a record of all police interactions with the public allows more oversight of police behavior by administrators and provides more transparency of police activity, both of which are important in improving relationships with communities that have developed distrust with law enforcement (Cathcart, 2017). Maintaining a first-hand recording of a police encounter also allows a more complete story to be told when cell phone footage by a bystander is taken out of context (International Association of Chiefs of Police [IACP], 2014a).

The ability to interact with others in sometimes contentious settings requires a set of social interaction skills that come from experience and training (Dai, 2020). Current training practices that engage an officer's social interaction skills involve giving new

recruits scenarios where they are observed and given feedback by trainers (Reaves, 2016). Recruits are then given the opportunity in field training to use their newly developed skills on actual police calls, supervised by an experienced field training officer (Reaves, 2016). Throughout the officer's career, he or she will be required to attend in-service training that touches on multiple aspects of police work (Reaves, 2016). One important aspect missing from this training framework is the deliberate practice or ample opportunity for task repetition to refine performance (Wolfe, Rojek, McLean and Alpert, 2020). Improving access to this type of training could increase the social interaction skills of police officers, enabling them to become more skilled at directing confrontational behavior. Relying on experience alone to improve performance is unlikely.

Training that focuses on building improved police-civilian interactions are becoming more common in police departments nationwide (Dai, 2020; Reaves, 2016; Wolfe, Rojek, McLean, and Alpert, 2020). In 2015, President Obama developed a task force to address this issue, resulting in a call for more de-escalation training for police (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing 2015). One training program with promising results that is dedicated to improving social interaction skills in police personnel is Tact, Tactics, and Trust (T3). Wolfe, Rojek, McLean, and Alpert (2020) found that this program was successful in modifying trainees' attitudes toward certain practices of procedural justice, which is necessary in promoting more skilled interaction to avoid unnecessary escalation. Improving police training is the first step in addressing police-civilian interactions.

The introduction to the world of policing begins in the police academy. Every state maintains their own variation in training standards, with an average of four to six months in length (Burke, 2016). According to the Police Executive Research Forum (2015), most departments provide their recruits and experienced officers with inadequate training. This lack of adequate training is a serious concern for the police profession, as it has far-reaching implications. Police administrators nationwide need to improve training standards, especially in the realm of improving social interaction skills in their officers.

The problem statement, purpose of the study, research question, and theoretical framework used for this phenomenological study are discussed in this chapter. The nature of the study and existing research regarding the effect officer aggression has on civilian perceptions of police-civilian encounters are presented. I also identify the gap in the literature that prompted this study, in addition to presenting the limitations and significance of the study. The chapter's conclusion contains a summary of the key points of this study.

Background

Successful police-civilian relationships are built on trust by the community in their police officers. Ekins (2016) details a survey that showed that 49% of the public in the United States believes that police officers have a philosophy of being "above the law" and 46% think that police officers are rarely held accountable for their misdeeds. The ability to trust the police is directly affected by how police officers conduct themselves in

an official capacity. Choi, Khajavy, Raddawi, and Giles (2019) investigate how police accommodative communication affects police-civilian interactions. Results showed that accommodative communication is a significant predictor of trust of the police by civilians.

To improve police-civilian relationships, among many other things, police departments nationwide have begun to require body-worn cameras by their officers. Cathcart (2017) investigates law enforcement efforts to develop organizational policy regarding body-worn cameras through the perspective of Institutional Analysis and Development framework. Using a phenomeonological approach to inquiry with a community that had experienced the full implementation of body-worn cameras within their respective police agency, Cathcart (2017) learned the impact of body-worn cameras had significantly impacted police-citizen interactions, specifically with police and community relationships, citizen perceptions of the police, and police use of force.

Evidence-based changes in policies and training can improve police-civilian interactions (Engel, McManus, and Isaza, 2020). Dart (2016, July 21) describes how a Washington governor enacted a law in his state mandating de-escalation training for all state law enforcement, significantly reducing the number of SWAT callouts in some departments. The lack of training in police departments nationwide must be remedied. Harris (2019) details a study on Military Police Corps' active shooter preparedness plan using 15 semi structured qualitative interviews with Military Police Corps leaders and soldiers. Using institutional analysis and development framework, the daily operational

procedures within the Military Police Corps were analyzed, revealing a perception from the participants that current training for first responders was inadequate. Recommendations for policy changes are made to improve public safety.

An individual's demeanor has been determined to have a significant impact on officer behavior (Nix, Pickett, Wolfe, and Campbell, 2017; James, James, and Vila, 2018; Nix, Pickett, and Mitchell, 2019; Pickett and Nix, 2019; Roche, 2019). Nix, Pickett, Wolfe, and Campbell (2017) present a study where two randomized experiments were conducted to determine if suspect race and demeanor affect the officer's perception of danger while interacting with suspicious persons. Findings showed that race was statistically insignificant, but demeanor was, leading officers to perceive increased threats of violence with disrespectful suspects. James, James, and Vila (2018) detail a study where 50 police officers participated in controlled-laboratory experiment where they encountered multiple video scenarios. Each scenario was different, with individuals of different races, clothing style, and levels of cooperation. Findings showed that race and attire did not predict how officers interacted with the scenarios. The demeanor, however, of on-screen individuals did, with officers being more likely to verbally escalate and use deadly force when faced with confrontational individuals. Nix, Pickett, and Mitchell (2019) detail a study where they administered a series of three randomized vignettes to 546 police officers involving different police-civilian encounters. Results showed that civilian demeanor exerts a significant impact on how police officers interpret suspicion, threat, and antagonistic emotions, influencing police decision-making. Pickett and Nix (2019) detail a study of sworn officers who were surveyed in the Fall of 2016, revealing

that officers use procedural justice judgements to assess civilians on multiple levels, influencing their policing style. Their results suggest that police officers feel less threatened where there is an increase in the quality of civilians' treatment of the police and are less likely to use aggressive policing styles. Roche (2019) produces a study that investigates the impact of different variables, specifically, procedurally just tactics, and an individuals' willingness to comply in a police-civilian encounter. Findings show that non-procedurally just treatment increases fear and anger and decreases an individual's willingness to comply.

The amount of stress per shift on an officer was studied by Jetelina, Beauchamp, Reingle Gonzalez, Molsberry, Bishopp, and Lee (2020). They present a study that uses qualitative data from 28 police officers to describe multi-level characteristics that define high-stress calls and to characterize factors that impact cumulative stress during their shift. Police officers are susceptible to events that follow high levels of stress, such as injury, excessive use of force, etc. As a result, they seek to interrupt the number of high-risk calls an officer is allowed to respond to, reducing the officer's exposure to stress.

Khogali and Fondacaro (2017) present a study that investigated the relationship between a suspect's race and participants' evaluations of police-civilian interactions. They learned that participants who played the role of civilian in the experiment felt the suspect was more resistant than participants who played the role of police officer. This study highlights the differences that exist in the role and perspective of evaluators when appraising police-civilian encounters.

Problem Statement

There is a problem in American policing concerning police-civilian encounters. The problem, specifically, is researchers do not know how police officer aggression (police officer shouting, cursing, threatening to arrest, or kicking/hitting subject) affects the civilian perception (measured as necessary or unnecessary) of the officer's actions (Nix, Pickett, and Mitchell, 2019). This problem impacts the ability to improve police-community relations, decreasing trust in the police by the community (Choi, Khajavy, Raddawi, and Giles 2019; Dart, 2016). Currently, almost half of the U.S. population believes police are "above the law" and are not held accountable for their actions (Ekins, 2016, p. 4). There are many possible factors contributing to this problem including: improper police training, an increased focus on military style standards, racial tensions, and sensationalized police portrayal by mainstream media (Mummolo, 2018). Race, however, was not examined as a variable, as it is beyond the scope of this study. In the future, further research is needed to examine the effects of race on police officer aggression and citizen perceptions.

Literature reviewed for this study identified the use of de-escalation techniques and communication tactics as the foundation for the focus of other researcher's studies, centering on civilian demeanor and its relationship to police decision making outcomes (Choi, Khajavy, Raddawi, and Giles 2019; Dart, 2016; Nix, Pickett, and Mitchell, 2019). None of the literature reviewed examined the relationship between police officer aggression and civilian perceptions of police-civilian encounters. This study filled this gap by contributing to the body of knowledge needed to address the problem by

providing data to public policy decision makers to formulate and or change policies on mandating appropriate training to increase verbal de-escalation techniques in police officers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if there is a relationship between police officer aggression and an individual's perception of the officer's actions. The significance of the relationship is that it may create an understanding of how officer demeanor can influence police-civilian encounters.

Research Question

I designed this study to determine if there is a correlation between police officer aggression (police officer shouting, cursing, threatening to arrest, or kicking/hitting subject) and an individual's perception of the officer's actions (whether the officer's actions were necessary) in an encounter with law enforcement. The following research questions guided this research:

RQ1: To what extent is police officer aggression correlated to an individual's perception of the officer's actions?

HO: There is a statistically significant correlation between police officer aggression and an individual's perception of the officer's actions.

*H*1: There is no statistically significant correlation between police officer aggression and an individual's perception of the officer's actions.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that was used in this study is institutional analysis and development (IAD) framework. IAD framework allows scholars to study how society uses institutional arrangements to solve common issues and to comprehend the rationale of institutional designs (Ostrom, 2005; Weible and Sabatier, 2018). This study determined that there is a correlation between police officer aggression and civilian perceptions of the officer's actions. Researchers know very little about how police officer aggression affects civilian perception of police actions (Nix, Pickett, and Mitchell, 2019) and I sought to add to the body of knowledge in this matter. IAD framework is relevant to this dissertation topic and problem statement because it has a problem-solving orientation, offering explanations on how institutions influence individuals and their behavior (Ostrom, 2005). The use of IAD framework produced an understanding of institutional design, which enables the development of informed programs to advance institutional production (Ostrom, 2005). The use of this framework guided this study as I sought to advance the state of police-civilian relations with evidence-based information. I selected IAD framework as being the most appropriate for framing my proposed research because of its problem-solving focus, its emphasis on rules as the means to resolving issues, and its ability to act as a language that enables scholars across the spectrum of social sciences to communicate and cumulate knowledge more effectively (Ostrom, 2005). IAD framework is relevant for this study because it focuses on actions and interactions and evaluating subsequent outcomes (Ostrom, 2005).

In sum, this theory helped analyze how officer aggression affects civilian perceptions of police-civilian encounters. My external variable was defined as officer aggression. Officer aggression was measured by examining whether the officer cursed at the citizen, shouted at the citizen, whether the officer threatened to arrest the citizen, or whether the officer threatened to use force against the citizen. The action situation was respondents who indicated being stopped by the police while driving a vehicle. The resulting outcome was the civilian's perception of the encounter, which was measured by whether the citizen believed the officer's actions were necessary or not.

Nature of the Study

I performed a quantitative methodology study using correlational design to analyze secondary archival data from the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (NACJD) (United States. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2020). I determined whether there was a relationship between police officer aggression and civilian perceptions of the officer's actions. Correlational analysis is a non-experimental design that analyzes different occurrences to determine if there is a co-relationship between variables (Chiang, Jhangiani, and Price, 2015; Price, 2017; Statistics Solutions, 2021; Walden University, 2010). The goal of this research was to determine whether there was a relationship between the independent variable (police officer aggression) and dependent variable (civilian perception of the officer's actions). Correlational design was the most appropriate choice for this type of study as it is designed to determine whether a relationship exists between variables, and if so, in what way. Correlational design also

determines the strength of the relationship between two variables, which was useful when discussing the implications of this research for public policy and police training.

In this research, there was no manipulation of the independent variable, nor was there any randomization of the study participants. This study involved the use of human subjects, making it impractical to use traditional efforts at experimental control (Rudestam and Newton, 2015). However, I was able to determine if there was a causal relationship by performing a correlational study to analyze whether police officer aggression increases or decreases civilian perceptions of the officer's actions.

Definitions

The following definitions are provided to clarify terms in this study:

Accommodative communication. A de-escalation technique that uses communication to accentuate similarity between the responding officer and the individual at the center of a police call.

Civilian compliance. The condition of agreeing and cooperating with law enforcement efforts by non-police subjects, offering no resistance, excluding incidents of officer misconduct.

Civilian perception. How an individual feels (measured as necessary or unnecessary) about the actions a police officer took during a police-civilian encounter.

Police officer aggression. Heightened techniques used by police officers, either verbally or physically, to gain compliance from a civilian in a police-civilian encounter.

Police-civilian encounters. Interactions that occur between police officers and civilians as the result of a legal infraction or call for service.

Assumptions

There were two significant assumptions in this study. One was that it is assumed participants in the Police-Public Contact Survey, 2018 answered truthfully regarding their interactions with the police. Since the analysis is of secondary archival data from the NACJD, there was no way for me to determine the participant's honesty in their answers. It was also assumed that the data was accurately reported by the NACJD. There were no flaws or criticisms of the NACJD that could be found in published form. The original intent for this dataset was not for the purposes of this research.

Scope and Delimitations

Police aggression can refer to many aspects of police behavior. In this study, I focused on police aggression that resulted in the officer cursing, yelling, or using physical force on a citizen. I focused on this type of police behavior to determine if it had any effect on citizen perception of the officer's actions. I used secondary data analysis on a federally funded survey of citizens who reported contact with the police during the time frame of July 1, 2018, to December 31, 2018 (United States. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2020). This was the latest dataset available from United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The study included citizens from across the U.S. who were ages 16 and older.

Limitations

The limitation of using correlational design regards its inability to manipulate the order of the study's variables. This inability means that no causal direction can be attributed to the relationship being studied (Chiang, Jhangiani, and Price, 2015; Price, 2017; Statistics Solutions, 2021; Walden University, 2010). Being unable to attribute a causal direction to the relationship raises concerns for the study's internal validity (Trochim and Land, 1982). The internal validity of a study refers to the trustworthiness and meaningfulness of the research results. This limitation was remedied by maintaining temporal precedence, covariation of the cause and effect, and ruling out any plausible alternative explanations. The secondary data used in this study was deemed credible as the following standard criteria are known: who collected the data, what is the provider's purpose, when was the data was collected, how was it collected, what type of data was collected, and whether the data is consistent with data from other sources. The scientific significance of this study was to explore whether there is a correlation between officer aggression and civilian perception of the officer's actions.

Another limitation to this study was its use of secondary archival data. Cheng and Phillips (2014) explain that the available data in secondary analysis is collected in a manner that could fail to address the specific research question and hypothesis of the researcher's current study. Researchers who analyze secondary data are not involved in the original collection process, leaving many of their desired variables uncollected. Concise documentation and relevant information regarding the validity of the data from the provider was used to alleviate this issue.

Significance

The results of this study highlighted the possible need for police departments to allocate more resources to officer communication training. According to the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (n.d.), a component of the U.S. Department of Justice, police departments can repair and strengthen community relationships by understanding and training officers on three key concepts: procedural justice, bias reduction, and racial reconciliation. Insights from this study should assist police administrators to drive policy regarding training requirements that include the topics of conflict resolution, de-escalation, and positive engagement. Police officers are responsible for serving their communities and should do so in a respectful and professional manner, becoming a force for social change. Because effective law enforcement requires cooperation from the community, communication training increases the probability of a greater incidence of positive police-civilian encounters.

Summary

Despite having one of the most advanced law enforcement system in the world, viral police misconduct videos have illustrated woeful inadequacies in police training in departments nationwide. A national survey showing that 49% of the public in the United States believes that police officers have a philosophy of being "above the law" and 46% think that police officers are rarely held accountable for their misdeeds highlights this dilemma (Ekins, 2016, p. 4). Police administrators nationwide must incorporate training to improve social interaction skills into their departments and consider new approaches to police academy training to address appropriate use of aggressive and assertive tactics by

their officers. This phenomenological study filled the gap in the literature by providing data to public policy decision makers to formulate and or change policies on mandating appropriate training to increase verbal de-escalation techniques and improving social interaction skills in police officers.

In Chapter 2, I provide a review of the literature to develop an in-depth understanding of police officer aggression during police-civilian encounters and civilian perceptions. This review guided me in developing the rationale for this study where I examined the effects of aggressive behavior in police officers on citizen perception and why excessive aggressive behavior diminishes the legitimacy of the police, forms barriers between the law enforcement community and the people they serve and harms the trust people have in the police.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The declining relationship that exists between the police and the communities they serve presents the U.S. with a dire public safety issue. Understanding the complexities of police-civilian encounters requires a thorough examination of multiple topics relevant to policing, yet researchers do not know how police officer aggression affects civilian perceptions of the officers' actions. The purpose of this quantitative study is to determine if there is a relationship between police officer aggression and an individual's perception of the officer's actions. Topics are explored to provide insight into tragic use of force incidents and their impact on policing, the state of confidence in policing by the public, police training, and the factors that influence police and civilian behavior. Other topics were analyzed to consider recent research findings associated with procedural justice and citizen perceptions of police encounters, and to provide a foundation for understanding of contemporary efforts and challenges relative to the development of policy affiliated with improving police-civilian relationships. The chapter ends with a summary and conclusions section.

Literature Search Strategy

Analysis of the scholarly literature involved the use of peer-reviewed academic studies relevant to police behavior, police training, accommodative communication, police-civilian encounters, and citizen perspectives of police encounters, as well as official reporting from multiple police agencies. I conducted searches in local libraries, online academic libraries, such as the Walden University Library and Google Scholar, to

find relevant literature regarding the effect of police officer aggression on perception in citizens. In addition, online databases were utilized, such as Academic Search Complete, EBSCO, Google Books, and Pro-Quest. The theoretical framework used in this study was developed because of the selected literature. The keywords used to search the databases were the following: *aggressive tactics, civilian behavior, citizen compliance, citizen perception, police behavior, police demeanor, police-civilian encounters,* and *policing*.

Theoretical Framework

The concept model used for this research is IAD framework. IAD framework, developed by Elinor Ostrom (2005), is described by its founder as an approach to understanding the policy process by outlining a systematic path for analyzing institutions that governs action and outcomes. The function of the conceptual framework, as summarized by Maxwell (2005), serves to inform the design of the study in such a way that it assesses and refines the research goals and identifies potential threats to validity in the researcher's conclusions. Two key areas of analysis that exist within IAD framework are the development of linkages between institutional arrangements and action situations and the interactions that occur among groups and rule systems (Blomquist and DeLeon, 2011). IAD framework, therefore, is relevant to this study as police administrators possess the ability to affect change within their organizational structure and can hinder or advance how police officers receive training and carry themselves in police-civilian encounters.

Previous law enforcement studies that were guided by IAD framework have

resulted in findings that inform policy recommendations to improve public safety

(Boettke, Liya, and Lemke, 2013; Boettke, Lemke, and Palagashvili, 2016; Cathcart,

2017; Gains, and Lowndes, 2021; Harris, 2019). Cathcart (2017) used IAD framework to

investigate law enforcement efforts to develop organizational policy regarding body-

worn cameras. Using qualitative interviews, she was able to determine how body-worn

cameras had significantly impacted police-citizen interactions, citizen perceptions of the

police, and police use of force. Harris (2019) conducted a study on the Military Police

Corps' active shooter preparedness plan guided by IAD framework. In his analysis, he

revealed a perception from the participants that current training for first responders was

inadequate. Both researchers were able to provide policy recommendations to improve
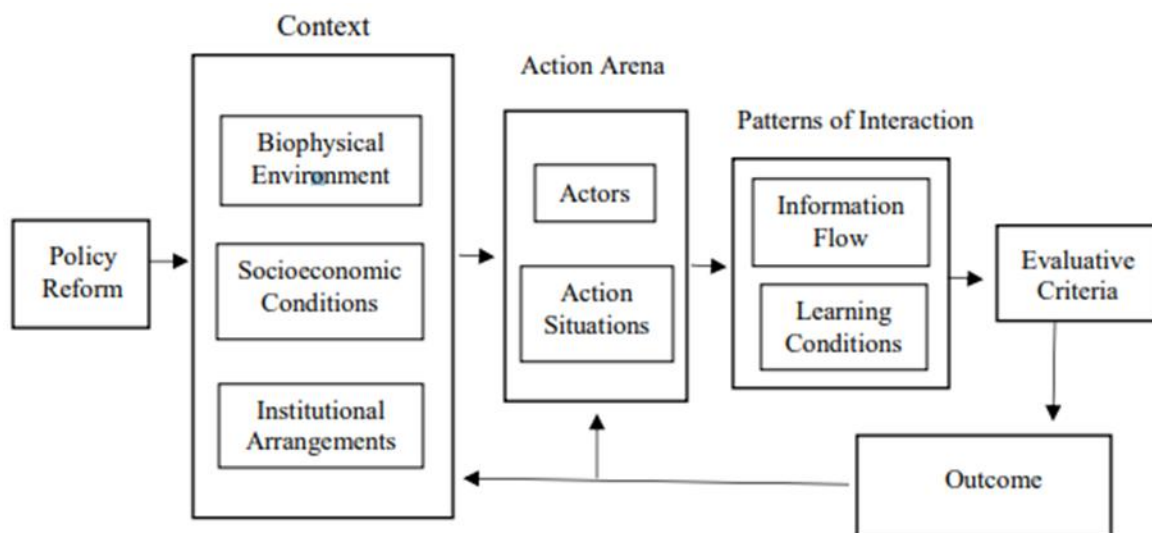
public safety based on their findings.

Figure 1. The Institutional Analysis and Development Framework. Reproduced from
Understanding Institutional Diversity, by E. Ostrom. Copyright 2005 by E. Ostrom.

Use of Force Incidents and Impact on Policing

The fallout caused by police-civilian encounters which ended tragically have far-reaching consequences, affecting policing indefinitely. According to a recent survey conducted by the Pew Research Center (2017, para. 43), 86% of police officers interviewed believed that recent high-profile police-citizen incidents that had gone viral on social media and on 24-hour news cycles had made their profession more difficult, especially during encounters with minority citizens. As a result, 72% of officers surveyed believed that some of their counterparts were less likely to engage in proactive policing (Pew Research Center, 2017, Table 1). This pullback by police is being referred to by some researchers as the "Ferguson effect" (Capellan, Lautenschlager, and Silva, 2020; Mac Donald, 2015; Nix and Wolfe, 2018). This phenomenon proposes that police officers have become less willing to be proactive in their enforcement duties out of fear of being featured in the next viral video (Nix and Wolfe, 2018). As a result of this pullback, crime has significantly risen (Capellan, Lautenschlager, and Silva, 2020; Mac Donald, 2015).

Police use of force is one of the leading causes of death for young men in the U.S., particularly among black men, where 1 in every 1,000 black males is killed by police (Edwards, Lee, & Esposito, 2019). In the U.S., more people are killed by the police than other advanced industrial democracies (Lartey, 2015). Edwards, Lee, and Esposito (2019) estimate that about 52 out of every 100,000 men in the U.S. will be killed by the police over their life course, with 3 out of every 100,000 women being

killed by police over their life course. These numbers pose a threat to public health, generating a need for evidenced-based solutions.

The law enforcement community relies on the public for support, highlighting the necessity of police legitimacy. The law enforcement community is sensitive to condemnation by the public and have responded by engaging less in enforcement (Deuchar, Fallik, and Crichlow, 2019). Some law enforcement officials believe the viral nature of recent tragic police encounters have led some police officers to be fearful of their jobs (Lichtbau, 2016). A police officer who is afraid to do their job for fear of scrutiny poses a public safety issue to the community they serve. To understand this phenomenon more deeply, an examination of trust in the police by civilians over recent years needs to be evaluated.

Confidence in Police by Civilians

Effective policing requires community cooperation, therefore making it essential for police administrators to be mindful of the police-civilian relationship their agency cultivates. Ekins (2016, p. 4) produced a survey showing 49% of the public in the United States believed police officers possessed a philosophy of being "above the law" and 46% think police officers are rarely held accountable for their misdeeds. According to a poll conducted by Jones and Saad (2020, Table 3), overall public confidence in police had decreased from 53% in the previous year to 48% as of June 2020, the first time in 27 years the Gallup reading had fallen below the majority level. Most national police reform strategies aimed at improving the relations between the police and the communities they

serve have been described as knee-jerk responses that were inadequate (Headly and

Wright, 2019). The current atmosphere of police-civilian relationships is in a downtrend,

creating a problematic scenario for current police administrators. Police officers need

their communities to cooperate with law enforcement efforts to be effective at lowering

crime and may find more resistance as public confidence continues to erode.
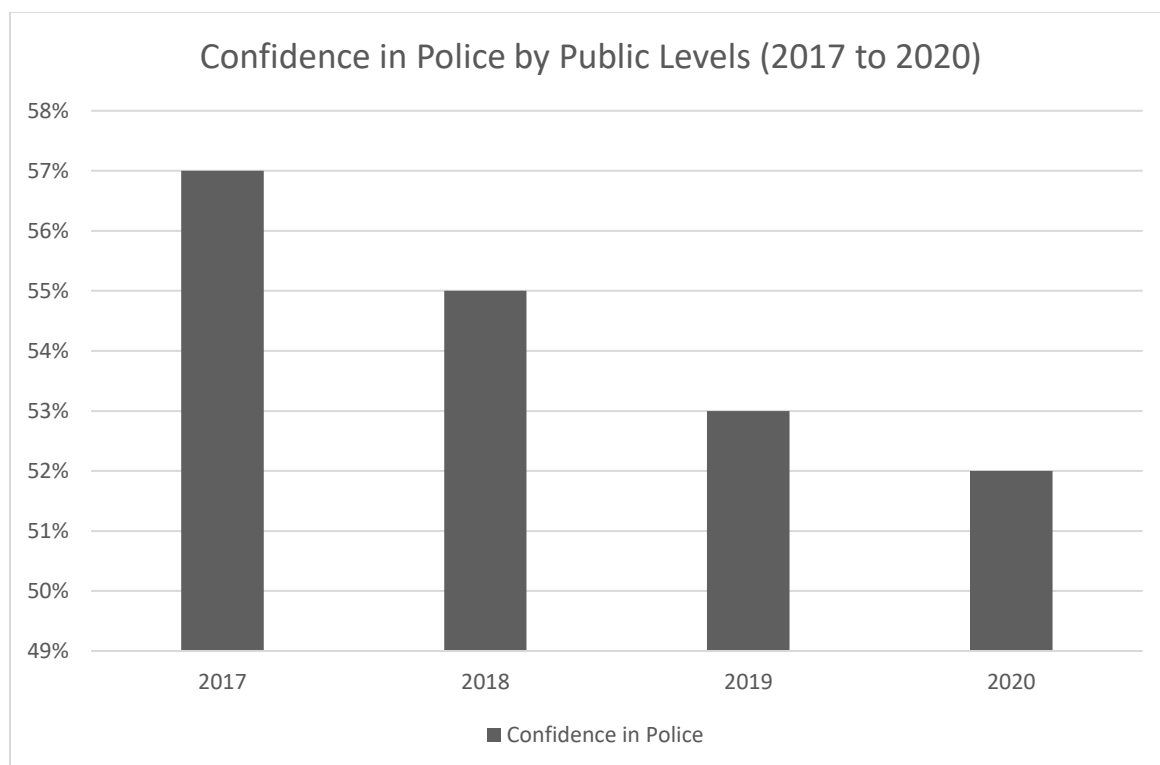

Figure 2. Confidence in Police by Public Levels. Adapted from "Confidence in
Institutions 2020" by Jones and Saad (2020).

One approach to rebuilding confidence in police by civilians is the use of

accommodative communication, where officers regulate their communication style to

accentuate similarity. Choi, Khajavy, Raddawi, and Giles (2019) discovered that trust in

the police is associated with how police officers conduct themselves in an official capacity, with accommodative communication being a significant predictor of trust by civilians. Officers who engage in underaccommadative behaviors are more likely to have dissatisfying interactions with civilians, resulting in a feeling of inattentiveness or closed-mindedness (Choi, Khajavy, Raddawi, and Giles, 2019). Civilians who possess distinct differences in group membership are less likely to trust police officers, emphasizing a greater need for officers to become skilled in accommodative communication. The communication abilities a police officer possesses begin to form at the beginning of the officer's career, where it is critical that they receive proper training.

Another approach to rebuilding confidence in police by civilians is to increase the amount of transparency in which a department operates under. Parry, Moule, and Dario (2017) found that viewing cell phone videos of police-citizen encounters had a significant impact on how citizens viewed law enforcement, producing positive changes in perceptions of procedural justice, obligation to obey, and willingness to cooperate with law enforcement. Releasing body-worn camera footage after a controversial incident could lead to a more positive relationship between the police and the community they serve, as citizens can now learn of or experience encounters far removed from the actual event.

Police Training

A police officers' decision making and discretion forming skills begin to take shape during their time spent in the police academy (Alpert, Dunham, Stroshine, Bennett,

and MacDonald, 2006). Nationally, training for recruit police officers typically spans a period of six months to a year in an academy that uses one of three approaches to training: stress-based, nonstress, and programs that balance the two approaches. Reaves (2016, p. 1) found that 48% of recruits from 664 state and local law enforcement academies in the U.S. received training from programs that were more stress than nonstress-oriented, from 2011 to 2013. Stress-based training involves the use of a military style approach, emphasizing physical demands and psychological pressure in recruits (Reaves, 2016). Nonstress training, in comparison, relies more on academic achievement, physical training, and an atmosphere that fosters a supportive instructor-trainee relationship. According to Reaves (2016, p. 1), only 18% of academies use the nonstress training approach, with 34% using an approach that combines both styles of training. The style of training a police academy uses shapes recruits into the future police officers they will become, dictating how they interact with civilians.

The focus on police training has increased recently among governmental and public leaders after multiple controversial interactions between the police and the public have drawn scrutiny of police tactics (Cohen, 2021; Shjarbak, Pyrooz, Wolfe, and Decker, 2017). These governmental leaders have begun to question the effectiveness of current models of police training, among many other issues (Cohen 2021). This has led some researchers to seek whether current standard police training reflects the contemporary challenges of modern policing today. Cohen (2021) found that on average, only 3.21% of police training focuses on public service values of fundamental importance to the practice of law enforcement. Increasing police training focused on public service

values may increase procedurally just behavior in police officers, which has been shown to increase cooperation in civilians (Sharma, 2017).

Academy training styles have a significant influence over how officers treat the citizens they meet. Lawson (2018, Table 2) found a positive correlation between the effects of militarization on police behavior and the use of lethal force. A positive and statistically significant ($p < .05$) association was discovered between militarization and the amount of deadly force incidents police officers engage in (Lawson, 2018, Table 2). Therefore, it is essential that new recruits receive adequate training that incorporates a series of techniques that focus on communication styles and how best to approach individuals who may be confrontational, as opposed to a strictly military-style curriculum. Teaching an officer how to speak with confrontational individuals in a manner that de-escalates hostile situations is essential.

The words an officer chooses to use in an encounter can have immediate consequences, either escalating or de-escalating a situation. Dart (2016) described a communication style known as "verbal judo" which uses tactical language calmly under pressure to achieve a clearly defined goal. This technique has the officer ask themselves if they are using appropriate methods, considering the mental state of the individual, as well as his or her own mental state at the time (Dart, 2016). Another type of de-escalation training available to police officers described by Dart (2016) is known as the LEED model (Listen and Explain with Equity and Dignity: in essence, be fair, treat everyone with respect and do not humiliate a suspect). This approach incorporates the

use of psychology to help officers understand how they perceive situations as well as those they are responding to. Communication approaches that incorporate the appropriate use of language, demeanor, and the disciplines of psychology could significantly improve police-civilian encounters.

Improving an officer's social interaction skills can have positive results for the police-civilian relationships which have steadily declined over the past decade. Wolfe, Rojek, McLean, and Alpert (2020) described an innovative program, called the Polis Solutions' T3 program, which succeeded in modifying trainees' attitudes toward certain practices of procedural justice. Procedural justice by police was found to be a significant predictor of compliance in citizens (Dai, 2020; Demir, Braga, and Apel, 2020; Li, 2018; Nagin and Telep, 2017; Reisig, Mays, and Telep, 2020; Roche, 2019; Sharma, 2017). The Polis Solutions' T3 program incorporated the use of deliberate practice and high repetitions of improved communication and de-escalation techniques, significantly improving the officers' interaction skills, leading to the avoidance of unnecessary escalation (Wolfe, Rojek, McLean, and Alpert, 2020). Training that focuses on improving the social interaction skills of officers should be implemented and held in the same esteem as training on firearms, defensive tactics, and legal education.

Factors Influencing Police Behavior

A police officer's demeanor when interacting with the public can be influenced by several factors that need to be managed by police administrators. Civilian demeanor was found to have the most significant influence on police decision-making and perceptions

of threat by officers (James, James, and Vila, 2018; Nix, Pickett, Wolfe, and Campbell, 2017; Nix, Pickett, and Mitchell, 2019; Pickett and Nix, 2019, Todak and James, 2018). Excessive exposure to high stress calls for service was found to have a positive relationship with increased injuries and excessive use of force by police (Jetelina, Beauchamp, Reingle Gonzalez, Molsberry, Bishopp, and Lee, 2020). Other studies have shown that police are susceptible to their environment and are more likely to use increased levels of force when in disadvantaged neighborhoods and those with higher homicide rates (Terrill and Reisig, 2003).

Maskaly, Donner, Jennings, Ariel, and Sutherland (2017) found that the use of body-worn cameras had a positive impact on police-citizen encounters, resulting in a major decrease in complaints by citizens. This seems to suggest that police officers modify their behavior when being recorded. Another study showed that body-worn cameras had no effect on the racial disparity between the numbers of Black and White arrests, but there was a small decrease in the total arrest rates after implementing the technology (Pyo, 2021). A reduction in arrest rates has been linked to increased crime rates (Rosenfeld and Wallman, 2019), which could have negative implications for community support of the police.

Another factor influencing police behavior that has been the subject of multiple studies is race (Boettke, Lemke, and Palagashvili, 2016; Brunson, 2007; Capellan, Lautenschlager, and Silva, 2020; Nix, Pickett, Wolfe, and Campbell, 2017; Pickett and Nix, 2016; Todak and James, 2018). Nix, Pickett, Wolfe, and Campbell (2017) identify

race as a potential factor that influences police behavior based on half a century of policing research that identified the characteristics of the citizen as a significant influence on police decision making. Studies suggest that blacks, for example, are more likely than their white counterparts to be stopped by the police (Epp, Maynard-Moody, and Haider-Markel, 2014; Gelman, Fagan, & Kiss, 2007), become the subject of a search (Engel & Calnon, 2004; Engel & Johnson, 2006), and ultimately arrested (Kochel, Wilson, & Mastrofski, 2011; Langton & Durose, 2013). The effect of race on police behavior was not included as a variable examined within this study due to the depth and breadth of the relationship between the two. This relationship should be explored through further research focused on racial dynamics and their impact on police behavior. More precisely, this dynamic is beyond the scope of this study.

The identification of factors affecting police officer demeanor gives police administrators the ability to enact policies which deter negative behaviors. Jetelina, Beauchamp, Reingle Gonzalez, Molsberry, Bishopp, and Lee (2020) found that reducing the number of high stress calls an officer can respond to during their shift could help to reduce the number of adverse events. The decisions made by police administrators have a significant impact on police behavior. Police officers are highly responsive to managerial directives, organizational stress, and policy changes. Mummolo (2018) discovered that the rate of unnecessary police-citizen interactions decreased when procedural changes to the protocol for reporting the reasons for stops by officers were implemented. Decision-making styles of police officers are significantly affected by organizational stress, such as the lack of support by their agency or peers, shift work,

complaints and scrutiny from the public and supervisors, the communication style of supervisors, the structure of police organizations, and variability of the work, the judicial system, lack of equipment, lack of promotional advancement, and workplace discrimination or harassment (Crippen, 2018). Policy adjustments that are geared towards improving police accountability and reducing organizational stress are likely to affect police behavior positively, enhancing their decision-making abilities (Jetelina, Beauchamp, Reingle Gonzalez, Molsberry, Bishopp, and Lee, 2020).

Factors Influencing Citizen Behavior

Understanding the factors that influence citizen behavior in police-civilian encounters allows researchers the opportunity to better understand how one could improve citizen perceptions of police encounters. Non-procedurally just treatment of civilians by police was found to significantly decrease an individual's willingness to comply in police-civilian encounters (Marien and Werner, 2019; Nagin and Telep, 2017; Reisig, Mays, and Telep, 2020; Roche, 2019; Sharma, 2017). Increasing procedurally just behaviors in police officers could reduce the amount of resistance by civilians (Demir, Braga, and Apel, 2020; Sharma, 2017). Dai (2020) found that officers who had undergone procedural justice training had improved interactions with civilians. Calm citizen demeanor was found to be associated with the use of police tactics that employed the use of de-escalation techniques, such as reducing power imbalances and being up front about the facts of the situation (Todak and James, 2018). Knowing how citizen behavior is affected by police treatment is the first step to understanding how police

administrators could increase civilian perceptions of police encounters, leading to a reduction in adverse events.

Demir, Braga, and Apel (2020) found that individuals who were stopped by police for a traffic violation were more compliant when officers were wearing body-worn cameras. Citizen compliance increased in another study where citizens were stopped by police wearing body-cameras, as opposed to the officers who did not wear one (Demir, 2019). Implications suggest applying the use of body-worn cameras on a national level.

Summary and Conclusions

A thorough review of the literature regarding police officer aggression and citizen perception of the officer's actions was completed. There were multiple sources regarding police officer behavior and demeanor, as well as citizen behavior and its effect on police officer decision-making style. However, there was a lack of literature on the effects of police officer aggression on civilian perception of the officer's actions. As a result, a serious gap exists. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology I used to determine how police officer aggression affects citizen perception of the officer's actions.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if there is a relationship between police officer aggression and an individual's perception of the officer's actions. The significance of the relationship is that it created an understanding of how officer demeanor can influence police-civilian encounters. Chapter 3 contains the research design used in my study, the methodology used to collect and analyze data, and the threats to validity that exist. The results of this study determined what effect police officer aggression has on civilian perception.

Research Design and Rationale

This study was a quantitative, correlational study of the effect of police officer aggression on citizen perceptions of police actions that followed a nonexperimental design using logistical regression analysis. The independent variable of this study was police officer aggression (identified as the officer yelling, cursing, threaten to arrest, or kicking or hitting the participant) and the dependent variable was citizen perceptions of the officer's actions (identified as the whether the action was necessary or not). To determine how police officer aggression affected citizen perceptions of the officer's actions, I analyzed secondary data from the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data that measured police officer actions and citizen responses from the Police-Public Contact Survey, 2018. The actions made by civilians who encountered aggression from police officers were compared to the actions made by civilians who encountered no aggression.

Methodology

Population

   The target population of this study were individuals who responded to the Police-Public Contact Survey (PPCS)-2018, which is a supplement to the National Crime Victim Study (NCVS), administered to NCVS respondents aged 16 or older regarding their contacts with police during the previous 12 months (United States. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2020). The secondary data used in this study was deemed credible as the following standard criteria are known: who collected the data, what is the provider's purpose, when was the data was collected, how was it collected, what type of data was collected, and whether the data is consistent with data from other sources. The NCVS is an annual survey inquiring about information regarding crimes against persons 12 years of age or older and is typically administered every 3 years (United States. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2020). I selected this target population because the data is made publicly available, making it easier to collect findings on such a large sample. The data was collected from across the U.S., from July 1, 2018, to December 31, 2018. The study population in the dataset consisted of 139,692 participants. The racial demographics of the target population are as follows: White 73%, Black 9.6%, Hispanic 11.4 %, Asian 3.4%, and Other 2.7%. I did not need to obtain permission to use the dataset because it is in a public domain for political and social research. Data was originally collected using computer-assisted personal or telephone interviews.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

Using the above-mentioned dataset, I focused on responses from the 7,417 individuals who indicated being stopped by the police while driving a vehicle. I used simple random sampling to obtain my sample because it is straightforward and easy to explain to others (Web Center for Social Research Methods, n.d.). I began this process by entering all my sampling frame into an Excel spreadsheet. I then pasted "=RAND()" into the next column and sorted them from lowest to highest number. After generating my randomized list of survey participants, I selected the first hundred names as my sample. To avoid an over-sized and under-sized sample, I used a sample size calculator provided by Qualtrics (2020) where the confidence level, population size, and margin of error were calculated to determine the sample size needed. I set the power level to a standard 0.8 and the alpha level at 0.05, in accordance with standard social science practices. I selected the effect size of 0.3 to cover for a small to medium effect.

Secondary Data Analysis

The main study this dataset was intended for used stratified multistage cluster sampling where the researchers interviewed a nationally representative sample of households regarding their encounters with police (United States. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2020). The period included the last six months of 2018. The main study's original data collection included the use of computer-assisted telephone interviews and telephone interviews. The dataset is made available to the public by the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (NACJD) (United States. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2020). To access the data, users must agree to the terms of use agreement as defined by NACJD.

Permission to use this data is made available to users who agree to only use the

information for statistical reporting and analysis. Users must agree to not use the data to

learn the identity of any person or establishment in the dataset. Users also agree to

reference the recommended bibliographic citation in any publication that employs

resources provided by ICPSR and to send citations of their published works to ICPSR for

inclusion in a database of related publications (United States. Bureau of Justice Statistics,

2020).

Operationalization of Variables

Following is a list of each variable that was used in the study, including its

definition and how it was measured. The participant's gender will be treated as a

dichotomous variable measured as 1 = Male, or 2 = Female, with no category of other

identifications. Race will be treated as a nominal variable and will be defined as 1 =

White Only, 2 = Black Only, 3 = Hispanic Only, 4 = Asian Only, and 5 = Other.

"Stopped while driving a vehicle" will be treated as a dichotomous variable and will be

defined as 1 = Yes, or 0= No. "During contact did police officer shout at you" was treated

as a dichotomous variable and was defined as 1 = Yes, or 0 = No. "During contact did

police officer curse at you" was treated as a dichotomous variable and was defined as 1 =

Yes, or 0 = No. "During contact did police officer threaten to arrest you" was treated as a

dichotomous variable and was defined as 1 = Yes, or 0 = No. "During contact did police

officer kick or hit you" was treated as a dichotomous variable and was defined as 1 =

Yes, or 0 = No. The dependent variable that was used was whether the participant felt the

officer's actions were necessary, measured as a yes (1) or no (0) response.

Data Analysis

Logistic regression analysis was used to analyze the data within this study. The

data was uploaded into the IBM SPSS Version 27 after it has been screened for accuracy,

outliers, and missing values. The data set has been examined to find any nonrandom

patterns in missing data and none were found. I summarized all descriptive statistics. I

developed my research question to determine whether a relationship exists between

aggressive police techniques and how civilians perceive the officer's actions.

This correlational study will be based on the following research question:

>**Hypothesis (H_a1):** To what extent is police officer aggression correlated to an
>
>individual's perception of the officer's actions?
>
>**Null Hypothesis ($H_0$1):** There is no correlation between police officer
>
>aggression and an individual's perception of the officer's actions.

Threats to Validity

All internal and external threats to validity will be considered. One way to

address selection as a threat to internal validity that will be used is to randomly select

participants from the dataset. This process will help to ensure that the characteristics of

the population are evenly distributed.

Summary

In Chapter 3, an overview of the research methods used in this study were

provided. I explained the research design and how the variables were operationalized.

The sample used came from an existing dataset that measured police-civilian interactions

and their outcomes. My data analysis was explained, along with any threats to validity

that may exist. In Chapter 4, I discuss my results.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative nonexperimental study was to determine if there is a relationship between police officer aggression and an individual's perception of the officer's actions. To accomplish this, I assessed civilian perceptions of actions taken by police officers who had stopped them for a traffic violation. This chapter is a description of the statistical results of the logistic regression analysis that was conducted concerning the effect of police officer aggression on civilian perceptions of the officer's actions using the Police-Public Contact Survey (PPCS)-2018.

Differences in the perceptions of the officer's actions being necessary or unnecessary were sought. The goal was to determine whether a statistically significant relationship existed between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Goals were achieved with the use of publicly available archival secondary data obtained from the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data. Records in the dataset contained information on individual's who indicated being stopped by the police while driving a vehicle, the actions of the police officer conducting the stop, and whether the respondent felt those actions by the officer were necessary.

The underlying question in this study was to determine if a correlation existed between aggressive police behavior and how an individual perceived those actions as being necessary or unnecessary. This underlying question is presented as a research question and hypothesis as follows:

Research Question

RQ1: To what extent is police officer aggression correlated to an individual's perception of the officer's actions?

HO: There is a statistically significant correlation between police officer aggression and an individual's perception of the officer's actions.

*H*1: There is no statistically significant correlation between police officer aggression and an individual's perception of the officer's actions.

Data Collection

The data was collected from across the U.S., from July 1, 2018, to December 31, 2018. The respondents in the dataset are individuals who responded to the PPCS-2018, which is a supplement to the National Crime Victim Study (NCVS), administered to NCVS respondents aged 16 or older regarding their contacts with police during the previous 12 months (United States Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2020). The study population in the dataset consisted of a total of 139,692 participants. In my sample of respondents who reported being stopped while driving a vehicle ($n = 7,417$), 4,174 were male, and 3,243 were female. The respondent's ages are as follows: 16-17 ($n = 67$, .9%), 18-24 ($n = 1,046$, 14.1%), 25-44 ($n = 3,115$, 42%), 45-64 ($n = 2,284$, 30.8%), and 65 or older ($n = 12.1$%). The races of the respondents are as follows: White ($n = 5,411$, 73%), Black ($n = 714$, 9.6%), Hispanic ($n = 846$, 11.4%), Asian (n = 249, 3.4%), and Other ($n = 197$, 2.7%). This sample is representative of the larger population of interest and proportional to the larger population of the United States of America (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

Table 1

Race/Hispanic Origin

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
White Only	5411	73.0	73.0	73.0
Black Only	714	9.6	9.6	82.6
Hispanic	846	11.4	11.4	94.0
Asian Only	249	3.4	3.4	97.3
Other	197	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	7417	100.0	100.0	

The main study's original data collection included the use of computer-assisted telephone interviews and telephone interviews. The dataset is made available to the public by the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (United States Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2020). To access the data, users must agree to the terms of use agreement as defined by NACJD. As a user of this data, I agreed to the terms of use agreement.

Analysis Process

I designed this study to determine if a correlation existed between aggressive police behavior and how an individual perceived those actions as being necessary or unnecessary. The secondary dataset captured data regarding the police officer's actions (shout, curse, threaten arrest, and kick or hit) and the civilian's perception of that action (necessary or unnecessary). To analyze the data on these variables, I ran a logistic regression analysis.

Results

A logistical regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of the predictor variable on whether the respondent felt the officer's actions were necessary or unnecessary. In this regression, the police officer's actions were the predictor variables, and whether the respondent felt the actions were necessary (1 = yes, 0 = no) was the outcome measure. The results for the full model were statistically significant, $p<.05$, indicating that the set of predictor variables did affect a respondent's perception of the officer's actions as necessary or unnecessary.

Logistic regression operates under 7 assumptions, four involving the study design and three relating to the data's characteristics. The first assumption is that the analysis uses one dichotomous dependent variable. This assumption was met by using a dependent variable that was measured as a yes or no. The second assumption is that the independent variables are continuous or nominal. This study employed four nominal independent variables (whether the officer shouted, cursed, threatened to arrest, or kicked or hit the civilian). The third assumption is independence of observations. This study met this assumption. The fourth assumption is that the study contains no less than 15 cases per independent variable. Each independent variable used in this study exceeded the 15-case minimum, meeting the fourth assumption.

The remaining assumptions for logistic regression relate to the collected data. The fifth assumption mandates a linear relationship between the continuous independent variables and dependent variable. This assumption was met as the independent variables

used in this study were not continuous. The sixth assumption requires that no

multicollinearity be shown in the data. Collinearity statistics were run for the

independent variables, showing that the values were well within range to indicate no

collinearity. Table 2 presents the multicollinearity test results. Lastly, the seventh

assumption requires that there be no significant outliers in the data. After testing for

outliers using the Case-Wise List in SPSS, no outliers were detected. All seven

assumptions for logistic regression were met for this model.

Table 2

Test for Multicollinearity

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.411	.027		15.173	.000		
Police shout	-.274	.050	-.264	-5.442	.000	.931	1.075
Police curse	-.126	.100	-.067	-1.259	.209	.768	1.301
Police threaten arrest	-.144	.052	-.136	-2.771	.006	.908	1.101
Police kick or hit	.314	.237	.067	1.329	.185	.850	1.176

a. Dependent Variable: Were these actions necessary

Logistic Regression Analysis

The model accounted for a small variance in respondents believing the officer's

actions were necessary (Nagelkerke R^2) = .193, explaining only 19.3% of the individuals

who believed the officer's actions were necessary or unnecessary. This leaves most

respondents who believed the officer's actions were necessary to be unexplained by these variables and accounted for by unknown factors that are unaddressed by this study. With this large amount of variability, this model and/or research design is unsuccessful in identifying variables that would explain variances in a respondent's belief that the officer's use of force was necessary.

Table 3 presents statistical calculations from which the interaction effect was analyzed, including regression coefficients (B), Wald statistics (W), odds ratios ($Exp(B)$), and 95% confidence intervals for odds ratios for each of the predictors. The results indicated that the officer shouting (B = -1.912, W = 23.345, p < .05, $Exp(B)$ = .148) and the officer threatening arrest (B = -.893, W = 7.886, p < .05, $Exp(B)$ = .409) were both significantly related to the respondent believing whether the officer's actions were necessary or not. However, the results showed that the officer cursing (B = -19.435, W = .000, p > .05, $Exp(B)$ = .000) and the officer kicking or hitting (B = 20.814, W = .000, p > .05, $Exp(B)$ = 1094838169.575) were both not significantly related to the respondent believing the officer's actions were necessary or not. Because of these significant findings, a negative correlation can be assumed or expanded upon to address the hypothesis I previously presented.

Table 3

Logistical Regression Results

	B	*S.E.*	*Wald*	*df*	*Sig.*	*Exp(B)*
Did police shout	-1.912	.396	23.345	1	.000	.148
Police curse	-19.435	7942.904	.000	1	.998	.000
Police threaten arrest	-.893	.318	7.886	1	.005	.409
Police kick or hit	20.814	7942.904	.000	1	.998	1094838169.575
Constant	-.299	.131	5.242	1	.022	.741

Summary

In the present study, the officer shouting and threatening arrest significantly affected whether the respondent felt the officer's actions were necessary or unnecessary, answering my research question in the affirmative. I can therefore reject my null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant correlation between police officer aggression and an individual's perception of the officer's actions. Results from the logistical regression analysis indicated that the officer cursing and kicking or hitting, however, are unrelated to decreased likelihoods that the officer's actions were appropriate.

Chapter 5 of this study will provide an interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications for social change. It will close by providing recommendations on how to implement increased communication training for new and current officers that focuses on accommodative styles of communication.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative nonexperimental study was to determine if there was a relationship between police officer aggression and an individual's perception of the officer's actions. To examine this relationship, I examined the actions of police officers who used aggressive tactics on citizens during a traffic stop. This study was conducted to create an understanding of how officer demeanor can influence police-civilian encounters. This study used a dataset comprised of a national sample of over 139,000 participants. Results showed that the officer shouting and threatening arrest were related to whether the respondent felt the officer's actions were necessary or unnecessary, allowing me to reject my null hypothesis. However, results also indicated that the officer cursing and kicking or hitting were not related to decreased likelihoods that the officer's actions were appropriate. This chapter presents an interpretation of the findings, theoretical implications, limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications for social change.

To determine if there was a relationship between police officer aggression and an individual's perception of the officer's actions, one dependent variable and four independent variables were developed. The dependent variable, which related to how the respondent perceived the officer's actions, was measured as being necessary or unnecessary from the viewpoint of the respondent. The independent variables were different actions the officer took in the police-civilian encounter. The findings of this study have multiple implications that follow.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings of this study extend the knowledge of police communication techniques and police-civilian encounters by showing a relationship between an officer shouting or threatening arrest and a civilian perceiving that action as unnecessary. Using an IAD framework to guide this study, I can explain how police administrators could influence their police officers by improving communication training at the beginning and throughout an officer's career. By focusing on training that encourages communication styles that are more accommodative, as discussed in Chapter 2, police administrators will be able to reduce encounters where civilians believe the officer's actions are unnecessary. Police administrators should find that by providing their officers with an additional skillset regarding communication techniques, they will enable them to resolve confrontational situations using more reasonable approaches. These communication techniques must be taught and practiced frequently to become an asset for the officer to rely on.

Reducing occurrences where civilians feel a police officer was too aggressive in his communication style can have significant implications for improving police-civilian relationships. Improving these relationships can have significant implications for overall public safety by increasing trust in the police and police legitimacy. Reversing current trends of declining police legitimacy and trust by the public should be priority number one for any police administrator looking to improve the current state of policing.

Limitations of the Study

There are multiple limitations in this study, the most important being the use of

correlational design and its inability to manipulate the order of the study's variables. This inability means that no causal direction can be attributed to the relationship being studied (Chiang, Jhangiani, and Price, 2015; Price, 2017; Statistics Solutions, 2021; Walden University, 2010). This limitation was remedied by maintaining temporal precedence, covariation of the cause and effect, and ruling out any plausible alternative explanations.

Another limitation to this study regarded the use of secondary data. The dataset used in this study has been deemed credible as the following standard criteria are known: who collected the data, what is the provider's purpose, when was the data was collected, how was it collected, what type of data was collected, and whether the data is consistent with data from other sources. Concise documentation and relevant information regarding the validity of the data from the provider was used to alleviate this issue.

Recommendations

The secondary data used for this study enabled the researcher to access a large geographic area, yet several factors limited the analyses of police-civilian encounters. More detailed responses from the respondents regarding their perceptions of the police officer's actions were limited as a result. Recommendations for future research include using a research design that employs the use of independently collected data, allowing the researcher to measure other perceptions of respondents to police actions. If this type of data were to be collected, a survey measuring a broad range of perceptions from the respondent would prove beneficial.

Implications for Social Change

Positive social change resulting from this study can influence how police officers are trained, specifically in the beginning of one's career in law enforcement where communication styles can be molded. This study showed a relationship between an officer shouting or threatening arrest and a civilian perceiving that action as unnecessary, contributing to the literature. This can be used to influence police training towards a more accommodative style, where police officers use communication skills to de-escalate situations. Improving citizen perceptions of police actions could drastically increase public safety by growing community support of the police.

Conclusion

Despite having one of the most advanced law enforcement system in the world, viral police misconduct videos have illustrated woeful inadequacies in police training in departments across the U.S. Police administrators nationwide must incorporate training to improve social interaction and communication skills into their departments and consider new approaches to police academy training that address appropriate use of aggressive and assertive tactics by their officers. By understanding how police actions influence civilian perspectives, we can improve the state of policing in the U.S. This phenomenological study filled the gap in the literature by providing data to public policy decision makers to formulate and change policies on mandating appropriate training to increase verbal de-escalation techniques and improving social interaction skills in police officers.

This study explored an understudied area of public policy regarding the training public employees receive for their communication styles. Specifically, it focused on police officers and their use of aggression on traffic stops. As the literature demonstrated, public perception of aggressive police tactics can have a negative impact on police-community relationships. A correlation between police officer aggression and an individual's perception of the officer's actions has been shown, indicating a possible first step towards rebuilding police-community relationships by improving police-civilian encounters through enhanced communication styles practiced by police officers.

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