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Compassion and Empathy: Comparing Police Officers with and Without Military Experience

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Harlyn Montealegre-Cerrato

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Compassion and Empathy: Comparing Police Officers with and Without Military

Experience

by

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MS, Walden University, 2015

BS, Saint Leo, 2012

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Interpersonal characteristics, including compassion and empathy, are an essential part of the relationship that police officers have with local communities. Historically, recruitment departments of law enforcement agencies have favored military veterans as candidates because of the similarities between the two professions, such as weapon handling and organizational structure. However, it is possible that prior military experience may negatively impact characteristics of compassion and empathy, given that military personnel are often exposed to conditions (e.g., combat) that can degrade compassion and empathy. The purpose of this study was to compare levels of compassion and empathy between police officers with and without military experience. A sample of $N = 129$ police officers were recruited from a large city in the Southern region of the United States, approximately half of whom did have prior military experience and the remainder did not. Participants completed a cross-sectional survey containing sociodemographic characteristics and measures of dispositional compassion and empathy. Data were analyzed using independent samples t tests and two-way ANOVAs. The results provided little evidence to suggest that police officers with and without prior military experience differed on overall compassion or overall empathy, and neither of these associations were moderated by law enforcement experience. Collectively, the findings do not support the notion that police officers with prior military experience have lower levels of compassion and empathy than those who do not. The finding may be used by police administrators to promote positive social change in hiring practices.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In the United States, there are approximately 900,000 police officers protecting and serving communities, with this number expected to increase in the next few years (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016). In recent years, police work has become increasingly challenging due to the heightened media attention on police shootings and changes in the types of safety threats (e.g., increase in active shooters and domestic terrorism) that are occurring throughout the United States (Gibbs, 2018; Todak, 2017). The changing context of law enforcement has prompted higher levels of attention toward a broader range of public safety threats and prompted the need to reevaluate our police forces. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020), law enforcement careers like police officers and detectives will increase in the United States by 7% between the years 2020 and 2030. Police suitability should be associated with the demands of the job to include de-escalating techniques and the ability to relate to the people that police officers serve. For example, up to 10% of law enforcement contacts with the public involve those who have a serious mental illness (Livingston, 2016), interactions that require specialized training and skills and necessitate a police officer to approach such situations with sensitivity. Much of the interactions law enforcement personnel have been with people in crises or who have experienced severe challenges, situations that require a strong set of psychosocial skills. Police officers are often placed in many situations where their roles may shift. Police officers have to balance the boundary between demonstrating empathy, a sense of understanding of others' situations, and compassion with taking necessary measures to ensure public safety as they go about their duties. Along these lines,

Konstantinos and Brooke (2018) suggest police officers are called to disturbing incidents that may require two roles in a single traumatic incident, namely a crime fighter and social service worker. Being able to fulfill both roles is essential to successfully executing law enforcement duties.

Police officers typically have a variety of roles in the communities they serve. In some settings, police officers must be diplomatic and work toward maintaining peace, whereas in other contexts, police officers must strictly enforce the law. According to Meares et al. (2016), law enforcement and civilian communities have different ways of defining fair justice and how it relates to the overall mission of social order. The perspective of the community about law enforcement is based primarily on their personal experiences rather than policies and laws created by lawmakers. Meares et al. (2016) noted that community perception of fair justice is not derived from the adequate execution of the law, but rather is based on public perceptions of fairness or procedural justice. In policing, appropriate interpersonal skills are as critical as laws and policies that are enforced. The success of law enforcement agencies and police officers is highly associated with cooperation by the communities they serve (De Guzman & Kim, 2017). Moreover, the ability of police officers to empathize with community members can contribute to building positive community-law enforcement relationships, improve the effectiveness of police officers' interactions with community members, and promote public order.

Increases in the population and changes in population demography require an increase in the presence of law enforcement personnel. According to Wood (2017), potential police officer applicants often do not realize the complexity of becoming a police officer and the challenges of successfully completing competency

requirements. The challenges of active-duty law enforcement are often realized when police officers are required to make critical, split-second decisions. Given the diverse job description of a police officer, even an impressive academic resume does not prepare a person for the challenges of police work. Duxbury and Halinski (2018) noted that police officers are currently facing challenges in fulfilling multiple roles as peacekeepers and roles in family affairs. The work overload and demands of police work have significantly increased over the years, with fewer resources available to compensate for the changes (Duxbury & Halinski, 2018). Police officers also face traumatic events that impact their psychological health throughout their careers (Konstantinos & Brooke, 2018). The consequences of trauma exposure may negatively affect the professional career of law enforcement personnel and can trigger behavioral changes toward others.

Background

The demands of law enforcement work require police agencies to use care in assessing the suitability of candidates and hiring personnel for the police work. As people with military experience are commonly thought to possess the type of experience and skill set that is relevant to law enforcement, many agencies target or prioritize military veterans in the hiring process. According to Conard (2017), more than 2.7 million troops have been deployed to war in Afghanistan and Iraq since 2001. Ideally, these returning veterans are the target of many police departments to fill in the demands of more police and more social order. Don and Brett (2011) noted that police agencies have focused on military veterans with the idea that military experience can contribute to good job performance due to the similarities of policing

and military service. The two careers have similar operational techniques, although each serves two distinctive populations under distinctive rules and policies.

The recent war on terror and the return of many veterans have resulted in an increase in veterans seeking nonmilitary jobs that they can easily relate to and allow them a smoother transition to nonmilitary duties. A police department, for example, is a desirable career for any veteran who wants to continue to serve. The uniform, rank structure, and brotherhood associated with police officers are closely related to military service. Although veterans may perceive this transition as relatively straightforward, there are unique challenges associated with veterans returning from global conflict and how their experiences in war impact their adaptability to civilian life (Dursa et al., 2014). Many of these challenges become evident when ex-military personnel become police officers in the populations they serve, particularly since the rules of engagement are different from their previous careers.

Shernock (2017) noted that even though military and police share similarities, military experience is often confused and mistranslated by police agencies. Ideally, the paramilitary structure in service members attracts police department and place veterans in front of the line compared to those that are just coming out of college (Don & Brett, 2011). The recruitment strategy of veterans can be concerning when addressing issues, including the psychological impact of prior military service. In the model, “military social work,” Martin et al. (2017) noted that veterans’ experiences go beyond a temporary phase. That is, the experiences of serving in the military are long-lasting and can impact interpersonal skills if not addressed accordingly.

An important consequence of military service is that soldiers are often dehumanized, the result of which can lead to decreased regard for the well-being of

others (Seidler, 2015). Affected interpersonal skills are often manifested in two primary ways, namely compromised empathy, and compassion toward others, both of which are important for de-escalating critical incidents in police work (Compton et al., 2011.) Compassion is the ability for someone to have meaningful concerns for another person's suffering and is motivated to relieve that suffering (Ling et al., 2018). Empathy, on the other hand, is the ability for someone to attempt to comprehend someone's well-being without making negative or positive of experiences and to attempt to understand what it would be like being in the other person's situation (Inzunza, 2015). Empathy and compassion are similar in addressing the concept of suffering. However, both have vital differences in the actual motivation to help another person and consideration of what it is like to be in the other person's situation. Inzunza (2015) argues that the performance of police officers can be hindered if police officers lack the capacity to understand others on a conscious and emotional level. A lack of compassion or the inability to understand another person's suffering has been associated with negative outcomes in police work, including poor cooperation among victims and suspects when conducting investigations (Oxburgh & Ost, 2011).

Inzunza (2015) noted that empathy positively impacts police work when it comes to the interactions of victims and offenders. The ability to relate to other citizens who are requesting police services can promote relationships and cooperation with the public. According to Inzunza (2015), empathy is an important characteristic in police officers, as the job demands interpersonal relationships with people from all walks of life. Research suggests that police officers who show empathy for rape

victims contribute to better cooperation among victims and higher prosecution of cases (Turgoose et al., 2017).

The interviewing of suspects and victims in communities is a crucial function of policing. The manner in which these interviews are conducted can influence the direction of an investigation. In some areas of police work, such as dealing with domestic violence victims, research has suggested that the attitudes and responses of police officers have adjusted the will of victims with regards to seeking police services (Gracia et al., 2014). A lack of empathy or care for the well-being of others can influence cooperation from both offenders and victims (Gracia et al., 2014). It is evident that police officers' empathic attitudes toward victims are not equal across the board, so it is essential to address this trait in police work. In another study, Oxburgh et al. (2014) concluded that a lack of empathy in police interviews impacts the type of questions police officers use when interrogating suspects of homicide and sex crimes. Moreover, the cooperation of communities and the response to police services may alter the manner in which police officers conduct their duties. Konstantinos and Brian (2017) addressed the importance of compassion and how moral distress in relation to the lack of compassion for others is associated with worse performance in police officers. Considering the empathy and compassion seem to play important roles in police officers' effectiveness in executing their duties, careful consideration needs to be devoted to the type of people agencies hire.

Although military personnel may possess a subset of the desirable skills agencies are seeking, evidence suggests that military personnel may not have the necessary soft skills to successfully execute their duties as police officers. Skills such as leadership, integrity, teamwork, risk-taking, obedience, performance under

pressure, and physical and mental capacities have been some of the qualities emphasized by law enforcement when seeking police trainees (Kumar, 2019). These skills are often found in current and past military veterans. Studies suggest that returning veterans often experience challenges in transitioning to civilian life and the civil workforce (Olson & Gabriel-Olson, 2012), including police departments. The transition of a veteran into law enforcement can be unpredictable and may depend on a person's experience while serving in the military. According to Litz and Carney (2018), veterans have a higher risk of developing social, occupation, and mental-health problems and treatments on compassion have been considered due to the lack of disconnect veterans have with others. Post-traumatic stress, for example, is a common problem in veterans. In another study Sara et al. (2018) argued that veterans after leaving the military face challenges with social connectedness and little is known how the lack of social connectedness impacts adequate transitioning for veterans returning to the civilian community.

Problem Statement

In efforts to recruit suitable candidates, many police agencies have focused on individuals with a military background that possess valuable skills like integrity and discipline (Don & Brett, 2011). The military and law enforcement share similar structures, such as following the chain of command, strict rules regulating behavior, and professional appearance requirements. The two career fields call for serving society, but the roles, objectives, and context in which the military operates tend to differ from those associated with law enforcement. For example, military veterans are often subjected to war zones, and their experience can foster subsequent survivor guilt and guilt related to violence, which may affect emotional stability, intimate

relationships, friendships, parenting, and work performance (Litz & Carney, 2018). Military and law enforcement fields share similar work disciplines, but their interactive approaches with people are very different due to the mission-based cultural setting in which they work on (Klein et al., 2015). In the military, the soldiers adapt the warrior mentality as they are called to stabilize communities and work under unforeseeable environments with unpredictable rules of engagement (Klein et al., 2015). Empathy and compassion toward people are not emphasized in the military setting as they are in law enforcement because of the centralized idea of being killed by an unknown enemy (Seidler, 2015). In contrast, law enforcement's main role is to protect and serve citizens of all walks of life and to enforce the law. Therefore, law enforcement and military domains each emphasize peace-making, yet the way peace is achieved differs between the two.

Don and Brett (2011) noted that there is no empirical evidence justifying that officers with a military background are more suitable than officers who never served in the military. Studies also indicate there are key differences between the personal characteristics of police officers with and without military experience. Shernock (2016) found that there are essential differences in the perceptions policing between officers with and without military experience, including areas such as involvement of leadership within the police force, decision-making, and the processes of dealing with stress. Don and Brett (2011) compared stress and burnout levels between officers with and without a military background, concluding there is an important difference between the two population groups in handling situations in police work, with police officers with military experience handling negative exposure better than others. Don and Brett (2011) reported that all officers were subject to burnout, regardless of

military experiences. However, negative exposure to traumatic events mostly affected the stress levels of police officers without military experience.

Despite these key differences that have been identified in the literature, to date there have yet to be any investigations examining empathy and compassion differences between police officers with and without military experience. Although empathy and compassion can promote effective fulfillment of employment duties during police work and noting evidence that indicates empathy and compassion may be compromised among individuals with military experience, little is known if a military background alters important constructs that are central to serving civilians and communities, such as compassion and empathy. Research examining these important psychological attributes may inform interventions and other training efforts to improve law enforcement effectiveness and contribute to identify suitable populations for police work. In this study, I examined these constructs directly in a sample of police officers with and without military experience.

Purpose of the Study

Military personnel who return to civilian life after working in war zones commonly experience mental health problems (e.g., depression, post-traumatic stress disorder) and psychosocial adjustment issues (Albright, 2018). Although military experience may reduce or limit emotional competencies that are important for performing law enforcement responsibilities, individuals with prior military experience are often prioritized for positions in law enforcement. Therefore, police officers with prior military experience who have compromised psychosocial functioning may influence the quality of their on-duty performance, namely their interpersonal interactions with victims, witnesses, and suspects.

In this study, I focused on the potential influence that prior military experience may have on the empathy and compassion of law enforcement personnel. I investigated this by examining whether there are differences in empathy and compassion between police officers with and without prior military experience. The findings of this study may provide an indication of whether military experience or exposure has an influence on key characteristics that are important to the quality of law enforcement performance and the responsibilities required of them. I used a quantitative methodological approach to identify whether differences between these two groups exist. The findings may be useful for developing training programs and interventions that law enforcement agencies could implement toward improving the interpersonal skills of police officers when on duty, particularly those skills that may be affected by exposure to military experience.

Significance of the Study

The United States has been involved in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, and the Afghanistan War for more than 20 years, and with many veterans returning home, there is a level of concern in their mental stability once their military service has ended (Mobbs & Bonanno, 2018). Approximately 70% of Iraqi veterans reported observing someone dying or being seriously hurt (Litz & Carney, 2018). In one study, Ahern et al. (2015) indicated that disruption associated with deployment and other military demands create challenges for veterans regarding being disconnected from family and friends. This same social disruption has created problems in veterans transitioning and trying to adjust to civilian life (Ahern et al., 2015). Although a combination of factors is often considered in the recruiting process when hiring new law enforcement personnel, law enforcement agencies continue to

prioritize targeting applicants with prior military service experience (Don & Brett, 2011) without comprehensively considering the potentially mitigating factors associated with military experience. Because of similarities between law enforcement and the military, persons with prior military experience often tend to seek employment in law enforcement settings.

To date, scant research has been conducted on empathy and compassion among law enforcement personnel, particularly among those that have prior military experience. Further understanding of empathy and compassion among law enforcement provides an indication of whether such a strong focus on military experience should be pursued, whether recruiting methods need to be improved, and whether a shift needs to be made in the core characteristics of interest to recruiters. The findings of this study provided insight into the presence of compassion and empathy in contemporary law enforcement settings, which may be used to improve operations (e.g., training) and citizen interactions. This could result in the enhancement of law enforcement personnel performance, increase cooperation among victims, perpetrators, and civilians in investigations, and improve trust in law enforcement. The findings of this study may also stimulate ideas for the development of training programs and other forms of interventions that target empathy and compassion among law enforcement personnel.

Framework

In this study, I focused on psychological dynamics in law enforcement personnel, but the scope of the study includes the role of military background on performance in the field of law enforcement. Therefore, it is important that I grounded this study with a theoretical framework that centers on military experience or

background, as this factor is theorized to influence the quality of law enforcement performance.

Recent theoretical developments appropriately capture some of these phenomena more holistically in the context of contemporary military enlistment. The model that best fit the purpose of this study was Friedman's soldiers matrix (Seidler, 2015). In the soldier's matrix, the idea is that soldiers are controlled, must adhere to the strict environment, and must learn how to adapt to the notion that there is an enemy to destroy (Seidler, 2015). This alone weakens the notion of being humane. According to Seidler (2015), the call to serve in the military is beyond just serving one's country; the emotional consequences and controlling environment give a soldier a new emotional structure and identity. Friedman (2013) describes this construct in a lecture titled "Are Soldiers Sick?" (As cited in Seidler, 2015). In the adaption of the soldier's matrix, empathy is decreased, and the element of compassion is less apparent. The new identity and personality developed in the military can impact lifetime changes that carry on after military service. Police agencies who rely on veterans to fill their police workforce may not be aware of existing emotional dilemmas of soldiers returning from war.

To date, the soldier's matrix has yet to be applied to research on empathy and compassion among law enforcement personnel with prior military experience. Applications of this model to these key psychological constructs may prove useful for understanding the impact of military experience on the post-military psychological functioning of military veterans.

Research Questions

Research Question 1 (RQ1): Is there a difference in empathy levels between police officers with and without military service?

Null Hypothesis (H_01): There is no difference in empathy levels between police officers with and without military service.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_11): There is a difference in empathy levels between police officers with and without military service.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): Is there a difference in compassion levels between police officers with and without military service?

Null Hypothesis (H_02): There is no difference in compassion levels between police officers with and without military service.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_12): There is a difference in compassion levels between police officers with and without military service.

Research Question 3 (RQ3): Is the association between law enforcement experience and empathy moderated by prior military experience?

Null Hypothesis (H_03): The association between law enforcement experience and empathy is not moderated by prior military experience.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_13): The association between law enforcement experience and empathy is moderated by prior military experience.

Research Question 4 (RQ4): Is the association between law enforcement experience and compassion moderated by prior military experience?

Null Hypothesis (H_04): The association between law enforcement experience and compassion is not moderated by prior military experience.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_{14}): The association between law enforcement experience and compassion is moderated by prior military experience.

Nature of the Study

The research questions in this study required quantitative data for formal hypothesis testing. Therefore, I chose a quantitative methodological framework for investigating the research questions and testing the relevant hypotheses. Within this framework, I chose a cross-sectional design, and compared the levels of empathy and compassion between police officers with and without prior military experience. This approach is used to conduct direct testing of interaction and mediation effects, which may be tested cross-sectionally but requires quantitative data. By using this quantitative approach, I was able to generalize the findings to the broader population of interest, based on the sample of law enforcement personnel that participated in this study. The independent variable was prior military experience, and the dependent variables were empathy and compassion.

Operational Definitions

Active Duty: An individual who has previous military training or has served in the armed forces. An individual that is currently serving in the United States military and is in good standing.

Civilian personnel: Civilian personnel in this research refers to any individual working in the private sector who does not work in law enforcement or in a military capacity. Civilian personnel refer to individuals who do not undergo military training in order to perform job requirements.

Combat veteran: Any individual who served in the military and has been to war in a combat capacity that has experienced a hostile interaction with a foreign

enemy. An individual who has completed at least one war zone deployment with any United States military branch.

Compassion: In this study, compassion was a key component to evaluate. Mercadillo et al. (2015) described compassion as the emotion that involves the feeling of moral obligation to alleviate the suffering of others and maintain a social bond in the process.

Empathy: Empathy in this study is defined as the capability of an individual to understand or comprehend the positive or negative experiences of others without making any judgment. Research has suggested that empathy has played an important role in police work and police interaction with the public (Turgoose et al., 2017).

Interpersonal skills: Interpersonal skills refer to any type of communication between individuals, whether it is written or verbal that impacts a response from the receiving individual. Benson (2014) refers the term interpersonal skills as the ability of an individual to communicate with another and the impact of the communication has on others. Interpersonal skills are essential to police work and its often emphasize on officers as a tool to gain cooperation and trust.

Law enforcement personnel: Any individual who works in a capacity to enforce local, state or federal laws within an assignment population.

Police officer: Any sworn public servant assigned to a jurisdiction that one of the main purposes, is to serve the public. Police officer refers to an individual in a position of authority whose main function is to interact with the public in such a way that it can take someone's freedom of movement when a crime occurred.

Military experience: A current or former member of the United States Armed Forces that completed military training and has passed the education and training requirements to hold an official military rank.

Nonmilitary personnel: This refers to an individual who never served in the military or had any military training related to the United States Armed Forces. This also includes individuals working in military structures that do not hold a military rank or position.

Veteran: An individual who has served in the military previously or is currently serving in the armed forces who has been deployed to a warzone under official military capacity with an honorable discharge and is currently in good standing.

Assumptions

The difference between the two types of groups that I investigated in this study was influenced by the experience or lack of experience of military service. It was not feasible to study the two groups prior to military service and monitor their behavior during military service. The study could have been long and participants could have exit the study, therefore officers with honorable military service were more ideal to investigate levels of compassion and empathy.

Scope and Delimitations

The study furthered research the impact of military service on compassion and empathy withing police officers with or without military experience. The study is limited to police only and more specific to officer within a large city and no other areas of the any other state. Other branches of law enforcement such as FBI, DEA and other agencies are not part of this study.

Limitations

The study is a cross-sectional design that measured variables only once, so causality and directionality cannot be assumed. The study focused on one particular group of police officers. The study did not focus on other variables that may or may not impact empathy such as gender or other psychological phenomenon not discussed. The study was conducted within a large city with a large police department. The researcher is a police officer and military veteran. To mitigate biases, the participants were gathered from multiple different police stations. Since the participating law enforcement agency have more than 3,500 sworn police officers, participants participated anonymously. This study is a cross-sectional design, at this time there is no other reasonable alternative.

Summary

The proposed research focused on a population that is continuously evolving as society changes in a multi-cultural world. Law enforcement training continues to change and reevaluated as new challenges arise from the changes in citizen's needs and increase demands of law and order. The research can provide education on two fundamental principles in human interaction such as compassion and empathy. The increase understanding and knowledge of interpersonal skills between police officers and citizens are crucial to the overall mission of law enforcement agencies across the nation. Although military experience is a desirable trait, it may not necessarily bring inadequate interpersonal skills in potential police candidates. Police departments across the nation can benefit from this research by obtaining knowledge on the importance of compassion and empathy in community policing. Moreover, the importance of searching for those skills in future candidates.

The United States military has faced many cultural challenges as war dynamics changes and the enemy infiltrates differently. The research can be used as a training tool to adjust or reevaluate current police training practices regarding the challenges of improving community relations. In recent years, law enforcement has received negative media coverage where the trusts in the community have been challenged. Furthermore, positive police interactions with communities have been the focus in most departments that lost the trust in the community. Compassion and empathy can be sought to be essential skills for police officers to connect with the community they trust. This research can provide insight into how compassion and empathy are important in current police officers serving in a multi-cultural community. Chapter 2 provided current research supporting the benefits of compassion and empathy in common human interaction. Moreover, it provided the challenges that military personnel face post-deployments and post-military service. These challenges range from PTSD and the difficulties adapting to the civilian population. The transitioning from military service to civilian service needs further research and understanding. The transitioning research can provide insight into how prior military experience negatively or positively impacts careers such as law enforcement. In the next chapter, some of the transitioning research provided a basic understanding of the current challenges faced by those exiting the military. It also provided literature research on the essential skills needed to be an effective police officer in a changing multicultural society. In summary, the research compared those police officers with military experience and those without and determine if there is a significant difference in the presence of compassion and empathy.

Chapter 2: Literature of Review

Introduction

In 2012, the Bureau of Justice Statistics accounted for 750,340 sworn police officers in the United States, which averages at 2.39 officers per 1,000 citizens. The need for police officers is a consistent priority for many police departments, as they struggle to recruit qualifying candidates and retain seasoned police officers in the workforce (Wareham et al., 2015). Law enforcement agencies have had challenges in the past several years as high-profile police shootings and domestic terrorism have jeopardized the trust that police departments have built within their communities (Dunn et al., 2016; Jetelina et al., 2017). In 2008, local police departments across the nation recruited nearly 61,000 police officers to fill in vacancies that resulted from termination, retirement, and other separation reasons (Giblin & Galli, 2017). The increased demands for public order in areas where the population is growing are crucial for social order. Police departments are faced with the challenges of retaining police officers and recruiting them to keep up with the demands. The efforts to keep more officers working and the efforts to fill in vacancies can be overwhelming. The overwhelming recruitment and retention efforts of such task can jeopardize the quality of applicants by pushing to obtain the number of policers to keep up.

The mechanism and recruiting procedures to obtain the most suitable police officer can be shadowed by the increase effort of keeping up with the growing numbers needed. According to Decker and Huckabee (1999), the history of recruiting, selecting, and hiring police officers has been a great concern throughout law enforcement history. These concerns have been addressed and reevaluate throughout the years as society changes. Anell et al. (2018) noted that there had been an

increased interest in the aspects of the suitability of police officers. However, even with the increasing concern of suitability, limited research has been done to define a suitable police officer. The characteristic of a police officer can be addressed from many perspectives, including education, age, gender, religious beliefs, skills, and moral domains. It is imperative that these attributes are examined when targeting potential police candidates.

The efforts of law enforcement to recruit suitable candidates have shifted over the decades and there has been a growing interest in hiring military personnel. According to Don and Brett (2011), police agencies believe that military personnel are more suitable due to their military experience, handling of weapons, and discipline structure already learned. The efforts in recruiting military experience bring concerns on how military experience affects the job requirements of a police officer. The skills obtained in military services can be desirable, but according to Don and Bret (2011), there is limited research on whether military experience contributes to a successful law enforcement career.

In this study, I focused on two domains that are essential to police work. Compassion and empathy are two domains that have gained interest recently. According to Turgoose et al. (2017), empathy and compassion in helping professions, such as police work, play an important role in building relationships and every day-to-day work. In the sections that follow, I discuss the domains of compassion and empathy in more detail, including their implications for law enforcement personnel.

Police and Community Outreach

Community policing has been the storefront of many police departments with the goal of gaining the trust of those they serve. The trust and cooperation of the

community can be hindered by negative social interactions police have with the community. Rosenbaum et al. (2017) noted that the success of a police department is often judged by crime suppression data, such as the number of arrests and tickets, with minimal regard to fairness, respect, use of force, and overall performance of the individual. Statistical data of arrests can show progress toward social order, but it can also trigger community outcries, protests, and riots when communities feel ill-treated. In Baltimore, Maryland, a zero-tolerance policy was developed where approximately 100,000 arrests were made in 2005 in low-income communities of 640,000 residents (Gomez, 2016). The massive arrest rate did not only accomplish social order, but resulted in the loss of community trust and many filed lawsuits. To illustrate, between 2011 and 2014, there were 317 lawsuits against the city of Baltimore (Gomez, 2016). The lawsuits were one of many issues with the massive incarceration approach. There is a need for police departments to maintain positive social interactions and relationships with communities in order to serve and protect citizens appropriately.

Police officers who engage in positive interactions with community members can improve the outcomes of day-to-day policing procedures. According to Rosenbaum et al. (2017), communities respond better when noncommunity members understand their point of view and circumstances without being criticized and blamed. Interactions between police and communities can affect cooperation from community members, which can subsequently impact police procedures like interviewing of victims and suspects and the cooperation of witnesses. In one study, Kelly et al. (2016) found that rapport and relationship building were major contributing factors to the cooperation of suspects in interviews and that cooperation was not gained through showing evidence or confrontational practices. Negative interactions can be

counterproductive to gaining cooperation in criminal investigations; therefore, maintaining good relationships and adequate interpersonal skills with the community are essential.

The law enforcement career field is a complex and demanding occupation. Social and interpersonal skills are fundamental components to a career in which most of the job involves interacting with people from all walks of life. A police department member, whether it is the police chief, detective, supervisor, or patrol officer, continuously interacts with the public. Psychological characteristics, such as compassion and empathy, form an important part of the communication process to build rapport and connection with community members. These kinds of attributes are deployed in many situations, such as dealing with persons with mental health issues who are in crises and obtaining information from victims or suspects dealing with traumatic events. Watson and Wood (2017) found that approximately 6 to 10% of police encounters are associated with citizens experiencing a mental illness. In another study, Lowrey et al. (2015) noted that one in four police shootings involved individuals who have a mental illness. Mok et al. (2018) suggested that law enforcement often serves an important crime prevention function among people with mental health issues, with the use of de-escalating techniques crucial to the prevention of violent behavior. This is concerning, as the police encounters with people with mental health issues has been increasing over the years.

Police officers who lack interpersonal skills and the inability to de-escalate hostile situations may have difficulty addressing encounters in a multi-cultural and lifestyle environment. In a study of 136 police-citizen interactions, Todak and James (2018) noted that police officers used the *human* tactic when de-escalating stressful

situations with citizens. The human tactic refers to the ability of a police officer to place themselves at the level of the citizen encountered and to minimize power imbalances between the authority of the police officer and the citizen (Todak & James, 2018). These approaches are very closely related to the idea of being more compassionate and empathetic toward citizens. Not only do such findings suggest that key psychological attributes are crucial to performing law enforcement functions, but they also indicate that salient psychological characters should be considered when evaluating law enforcement employment applications and making hiring decisions.

Overview of Compassion

Compassion has been a developing topic in many settings and has gained increased interest given its role in building positive relationships and wellbeing. The concept of compassion is an ancient term that has been featured in most religious domains such as Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, and Eastern belief systems (Brill & Nahmani, 2016). Although scholars have yet to agree on a formal definition of compassion, the range of definitions available are similar in that compassion is frequently defined as a cognitive-affective experience that motivates a person to help those who are vulnerable to mental and physical distress (Brill & Nahmani, 2016; Gilbert, 2014; Tveit & Raustol, 2019). Strauss et al. (2016) recently proposed compassion as comprising five components: (a) recognizing suffering, (b) understanding the nature of human suffering, (c) having feelings when others suffer, (d) managing uneasy feelings, and (e) the motivation to alleviate the suffering of others. The core of most definitions is the idea of acknowledging human suffering and acting to alleviate that suffering. Although the idea of being compassionate has been widely integrated and practiced by many political and religious leaders, thereby

emphasizing the importance of general prosociality toward others, compassion has also gained momentum in career fields where suffering is common to a person's professional role (e.g., medical professionals, law enforcement).

The term compassion has also been confused by many terms associated with similar feelings such as pity, empathy, sympathy, and condolence, all of which have been used synonymously with compassion over the years (Bill & Nahmani. 2016). A key component that separates compassion from these similar terms is the ability to understand the suffering and tolerate the process that takes to try to alleviate it (Corner, et al., 2019). Empathy has been confused with the term compassion due to its similarities associated with the reaction to the suffering of people. Hansen et. (2018) described empathy as the emotional experience mechanism of the empathetic person without the ability to help. Hansen et al. (2018) also argued that being too empathic may have negative consequences, as it triggers areas in the brain associated with pain. The concept of compassion is distinguished from empathy in that it begins with feeling emotions associated with another person's suffering (i.e., empathy), but extends further in the actions that are taken to alleviate the person's suffering. Hansen et al. (2018) argued that distress associated with experiencing excessive empathy could be overcome or resolved by acts of compassion. Moreover, it is important to know that compassion and other traits share similar moral foundations, but compassion is distinctive in that one takes action to alleviate another's suffering.

Compassion is essential in career fields where traumatic exposure is inevitable, such as doctors and police officers. Doctors and police officers encounter suffering every day, from low levels of traumatic events to life-changing events. In an article by Nijboer and Van der Cingel (2019) compassion is emphasized as the true

meaning of human care and it ought to be considered the most important compliment patients can give to medical professionals. Ideally, patients expect their doctors or nurses to alleviate their suffering and pain, whether emotionally or physically. In the medical field, compassion is considered a mechanism for achieving highly professional and holistic patient care. According to Strauss et al. (2016), many have presented the idea that compassion itself should be part of the outline that develops ethical principles in our criminal justice system. In the U.S. medical field ethical codes and the core values of United Kingdom National Health System (NHS), compassion is integrated into guidelines of how medical staff should treat citizens (Strauss et al., 2016). It is evident that compassion is a fundamental part of day-to-day social interaction between communities of all walks of life and those that care for them.

Klimecki et al. (2014) noted that it is important to understand others' feelings through empathy in order to have successful social interactions, but it can be problematic in settings such as hospitals where suffering is constantly exposed. The constant exposure to suffering can be overwhelming and challenging. In the United Kingdom, compassion has known to be an essential component in quality care for those receiving care in public hospitals. Tveit and Raustol (2019) noted that The National Health Service (NHS) of the United Kingdom had experienced many issues surrounding the lack of compassion in medical staff and doctors. This issue triggered the importance of compassion characteristics in recruiting methods and care management (Tveit & Raustol, 2019). First responders, such as police officers and medical staff, partake the same path of experiencing human suffering firsthand. Law enforcement might be at the scene attending to a victim of a crime involving physical

harm, whereas medical professionals would treat the victim as a patient in a medical setting. In a study, Klimecki et al. (2014) concluded that compassion training has positive effects in reducing empathic distress and strengthens resilience in people exposed to another person's suffering. Compassion may be a useful tool for first responders to acquire and use in law enforcement settings.

Compassion in police work

Police officers navigate many occupational stressors, including being exposed to high-risk situations that sometimes involve unknown dangers, dealing with morally charged situations, and having to make decisions that may contradict personal beliefs (Tuttle et al., 2019). Given these kinds of challenges, the performance of a police officer requires proficiency in many essential areas, including advanced physical capabilities (e.g., weapons handling, being physically fit), intellectual skills (e.g., legal knowledge and application, ability to perform duties under extreme pressure) and psychosocial abilities (e.g., emotional intelligence, resilience). According to Masood et al. (2017), personality characteristics represent important performance qualities of police officers, such as openness and social skills. These characteristics are important to study as they can impact victims, witnesses, suspects, and police officers themselves. One key capability necessary for successfully accomplishing goals of police work is compassion, which ought to be integrated alongside other salient aspects of functioning (e.g., weapons skills) to maximize the likelihood of successful outcomes. The extent to which a police officer is compassionate can have negative or positive effects on communities. Because police work requires good relationships with community members, especially in high crime areas where public cooperation is needed, compassion may be an important part of fostering relationships

with communities and enhance the ability of police officers to effectively address law enforcement goals.

Mazzotta (2015) addressed compassion and empathy in various settings (e.g., medical contexts involving nurses and doctors), but limited literature exists on compassion and empathy with regard to law enforcement personnel. In police work, compassion is an indispensable characteristic, as police officers often interact with homeless people, suffering victims, suspects, and community members who may have witnessed events or have information about criminal activities that might have occurred. Weingartner et al. (2019) described compassion in a medical setting as a recognition of emotional distress that influences the desire to alleviate a person's suffering.

Engrained in the duty of police officers to serve and protect their community is the ability to recognize any distress that might exist and work toward helping alleviate such distress. A compassionate approach is thought to influence the feeling of being supported and cared for among those that received a compassionate reaction (Corner et al., 2019). The ability to act upon someone's suffering is not an easy task to accomplish, but it is an essential tool for a career field like law enforcement personal to have. Without interacting compassionately with victims and members of the community, experiences of police officers in the field could have long-term implications for community cooperation.

According to Konstantinos & Brian (2017) there is limited research on moral suffering research involving individuals that are constantly exposed to traumatic events. In a profession like that of a police officer, many traumatic events dealing with moral duty and moral decision making may be experienced. Compassion has

recently been examined in the medical field, as nurses and doctors are actively sought and involved in alleviating pain. However, these practices are also integral and a common part of police work. Police officers regularly help to alleviate the suffering of someone in distress, whether that involves first aid or stopping a threat. Thus, similarities between the duties of medical professionals and police officers suggest that compassion is an integral part of effective law enforcement. According to Johnson et al. (2011), personal attributes of police officers contribute to their job performance. These attributes can be in the form of compassion, empathy and ability to care for others. Characteristics such as openness, conscientiousness, extroversion and agreeableness are among those desirable traits in a career field that requires constant public interactions (Masood et al., 2017). In the eyes of civilians, the community expects police officers to solve their problems, but the solution goes beyond arrest and prison time, it involves understanding and taking action.

There have been many studies on the benefits of compassion to individuals. In a study by Collins et al. (2018), compassion-focused training was linked to decreased anxiety and depression in people suffering from dementia. These outcomes can also benefit police officers, as depression and anxiety may be triggered by their exposure to traumatic events in the field. In another study, the physical benefits of compassion were also examined. In a study by Corner et al. (2019), the findings indicated that a compassionate listener had a lower heart rate than someone who was not as compassionate. In police work, where officers are exposed to high-pressure situations involving suffering, compassion can be a positive emotion that can buffer against the negative effects of police officers' experiences on their physical health.

Physical and mental benefits of compassion can have benefits for police officers' well-being and the communities they serve. In a study by Weingartner et al. (2019) compassion training improved medical students' non-judgmental acceptance and enhanced their observational skills in providing quality patient care. Many of these same skills are necessary for law enforcement career fields, where maintaining a balanced perspective and being attentive to signs of distress can be used to de-escalate traumatic situations, facilitate compliance, and promote effective resolution of events in ways that maintain or enhance community trust in law enforcement.

Overview of Empathy

Empathy involves being able to place oneself in someone else's situation. Empathy has been studied in many professional settings in which individuals who are exposed to difficult situations are provided care. Empathy, unlike compassion, can be experienced in many ways in our lives, from taking the perspective of others and experiencing personal distress over the challenges they are faced with. Alam et al. (2018) describe empathy as a social-cognitive process involving recognition, understanding and reaction to the experiences of other people. In a simple term, empathy leans toward a more cognitive-emotional response toward another person. Expressions of empathy in social interactions can create meaningful rapport, a more reliable connection with others, and relay a sense of care and concern for the suffering of another person. According to Soto-Rubio and Sinclair (2018), experts remind caregivers that the words expressed to others carry power that can highlight our thoughts, settle what is true, and can either inflict harm or promote healing in people we care for. Empathy is a crucial part of communication in settings where trauma and

the need for care are experienced first-hand, suggesting that verbal expressions of genuine empathy are likely to have prosocial benefits.

Empathy can be confused with sympathy in that both require a reaction, but empathy involves a deeper level of emotional experience and meaningful connection with another person. Empathy, along with other constructs like compassion and sympathy, can serve a positive purpose in our lives. However, each should not be confused with one another, as they have different ways of impacting a person who is experiencing suffering or distress. In the medical and law enforcement fields, empathy plays an important role in day-to-day interactions. A lack of empathy in settings such as these has the potential to negatively impact patient/victim care. Steinhausen et al. (2014) conducted a study on the quality of care of patients as it relates to the presence of empathy in doctors providing care. The study concluded that patients reported a higher quality of care when seen by physicians that showed higher levels of empathy. The finding of this study indicates that empathy in a setting involving the care of citizens can have a crucial impact on experiences of care. Studies like this suggest that more research is needed to determine the importance of empathy in fields where the care of others forms a crucial part of professional interactions, including law enforcement. In addition, ethical guidelines, training, hiring, and treatment practices are likely to benefit from integrating empathy. Recruiting efforts and hiring practices in professions like law enforcement ought to integrate empathy into recruitment decisions because candidates are likely to vary in their ability to experience empathy and genuinely express it to others.

Loffler-Stastka (2017) noted that the development of empathy is affected by a combination of factors, including brain development, personality, and socio-

environmental influences (e.g., parenting practices). With this in mind, not everyone is built to be empathetic or to show high levels of empathy. This suggests that empathy levels can vary between persons depending on a variety of factors. Although individual differences in empathy exist, empathy also has state-like qualities. Thus, experiences of empathy by a person may vary across different situations. Such variability suggests that empathy might be amenable to development and improvements via training or self-development initiatives. In the communication spectrum, empathetic approaches have shown to have positive outcomes for individual goals. In a study, Young et al. (2017) found that leaders who give negative feedback with an empathetic concern, received a better reaction from their subordinates receiving negative feedback. This suggests that empathy can be a tool to develop positive outcomes in intense situations.

Teding et al. (2016) concluded in a study that empathy can be taught and is most effective when the content of the training targets the understanding of others, the ability to feel other's emotions and being able to talk about the emotions. In another similar study, Sentas et al. (2018) found that training on understanding other's emotion, identifying emotions and expressing empathy increase levels of empathy in participants of the study. This may suggest that some people may lack empathy because of the lack of understanding of emotions, and this may be due to other underlying factors (i.e., childhood, parenting, trauma).

The idea of developing empathy should be considered in hiring practices in fields that are likely to benefit from it when dealing with victims and patients that require care. This can include in forms of training or empathy assessments. Loffler-Stastka (2017) also noted that empathy is also essential in the clinical decision-

making process, as it helps clinicians understand and make appropriate decisions by understanding more of the patient's needs, fears, and comfort levels. This same critical process can also relate to those in law enforcement personal were police officers make a decision based on the suspect or victim needs. Given the similarities between the medical profession and law enforcement, police officers are also likely to benefit from high levels of empathy, because it creates a positive environment for those they serve and it opens up pathways of communication with victims, witnesses, and perpetrators.

The experience of constant exposure to trauma can also have negative impacts on individuals. Klimecki et al. (2014) noted that empathy has an important role in personal relationships with others, but it can also cause pain in those experiencing excessive empathy. This can be seen in areas like law enforcement and the medical field where the need for empathy surrounds the victims of crime and patients in the hospital. In a study by Duarte and Pinto-Gouveia, (2017), empathy was associated with compassion fatigue and burnouts in nurses. Duarte and Pinto-Gouveia (2017) argued that empathy is an essential component in fields like nursing, but excessive exposure can cause negative effects. This suggests that the constant exposure triggers, long term fatigue of those being empathetic toward others. Klimecki et al. (2014) conducted a study that concluded that the emotional experience of empathy has showing activation of the brain where the pain is experienced, essentially creating a negative experience. In other studies, empathy has other positive effects. In a study by Hansen et al. (2018), it was concluded that being empathetic has longer positive effects than short term effects, in that empathetic individuals become emotionally stronger and that the negative effects become less extreme over time. The idea of

empathy can be a challenge within itself, but the benefits of its positive outcomes can outweigh the negative experience.

Empathy in police work

Rosenbaum and Lawrence (2017) noted that in recent years, many high-profile shootings have prone communities to question the legitimacy of police services. It is evident that some police agencies struggle to keep the communities' trust through many significant events, and some managed community acceptance through positive police interaction. The performance of an officer can be judged from many areas of police work to include the manner of interviewing parties involved in a scene and the overall judgment on making critical decisions affecting other people's lives.

Rosenbaum and Lawrence (2017) noted that police officers face many challenges that can include the ability to be effective role models, law enforcers, adequate social workers, marriage counselors and criminal investigators. These roles call for deeper interaction with the public and influence to have "emotional intelligence" as John et al. (2008) noted in his article. The demands to conduct day-to-day police work requires more than just achievable skills; it also requires interpersonal characteristics that allow officers to connect with those they serve. Rosenbaum et al. (2017) noted that police competency extends to the ability of public servants to appropriately address the issues faced by the community they serve and the ability to assist the community in understanding the decisions made that affect them. It is important to note that police actions can have a detrimental effect on people; therefore, the interaction should be carried out sensitively to the population served.

Empathy and police work go hand in hand in everyday activities in police work. An empathetic interaction can happen in many different police interviews with

victims, suspects, and eyewitnesses. In a study conducted by Rosenbaum et al. (2017), it was determined that empathy was a critical component to the success of procedural justice, in that the perception of the public on police officers had a strong effect in their willingness to cooperate through the criminal justice process. Community interactions that require a caring mind are common on a day-to-day police work. The ability of a police officer to understand victims and suspects can go a long way in completing a thorough investigation. Forms of investigations involving empathy can range from interviewing the victim experiencing trauma to interviewing the suspect and obtaining a confession. Current research has noted that people, in general, tend to respect and trust more those who are empathic and compassionate and dislike those that do not show any of it (Singer et al., 2006). In a study by Oxburgh et al. (2014), the study concluded that police officers with an empathetic approach in interviewing major offenders led to the release of more information by criminals. The study concluded that major offenders released more information about the crime when police officers in interviews showed signs of empathy. Victims of crimes can also benefit from empathetic approaches by making victims of a crime comfortable to speak about their experiences. In an article by Ahern et al. (2017) the authors concluded the building rapport using empathy in children who are victims of sexual abuse and exploitation serves as a good investigation. Sexual abuse and exploitation are just a few of many critical incidents in police work that requires a more emotional interaction.

Mental health in police work is another area that requires caring for other's needs and understanding their circumstances. Geijsen et al. (2018) noted that there is an increased interest in the psychological vulnerability of people with mental health

issues when interacting with police, as people with mental illness are more likely to give false statements and inaccurate information. Empathy in police work can serve as a tool for effectively interacting with people who have mental illness and other vulnerable populations, such as those in distress due to psychological trauma. In another article, Watson and Wood (2017) pointed out the importance of police officers possessing skills that enable them to effectively support people with mental illness when interacting with them while at crime scenes, during questioning, or during more in-depth interviews. Police interactions with those who are psychologically distressed includes understanding their behavior through an empathetic approach to their distress. Watson and Wood (2017) noted that the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) model of law enforcement has helped people with mental illness access resources and diverted them away from the criminal justice system. A key component of the being part of the CIT is learning how to de-escalate situations and properly identify mental illness through the attributes of empathy, which includes understanding and listening.

Recruiting Efforts and Targets

Recruiting of police officers is a lengthy and complex process compared to most career fields. The recruiting process continues to be a challenge for many law enforcement agencies as a combination of many factors are considered before given a seat in a police academy. The need for a suitable mind in police work is a constant hunt. Budget and other obstacles have impacted the way officers are given the opportunity to serve. In a study, Wood (2017) noted that some agencies did not report the use of polygraph or psychological evaluation in police applicants. This creates concern as the recruitment efforts of law enforcement are guided by an adequate

psychological screening of candidates. This can include adequate social skills and the ability to navigate complex situations. Polygraphs and psychological evaluations may not be used due to constrained budgets and the inability to afford the services (Watson & Wood, 2017). The lack of resources to hire a suitable candidate can be concerning as the population increase and the demands continue to rise over the years. In 1995, The US Department of Defense offered monetary incentives to Law Enforcement Agencies that hire military veterans. Constrained budgets and other departmental challenges can influence agencies to implement measures to increase the likelihood of financial support from the local government. As such, the prospect of financial gain to support agency functioning may supersede assessments on the suitability of law enforcement candidates, particularly with consideration to candidates with prior military experience. Moreover, police suitability can be overshadowed by employing more military veterans as police officers in exchange for incentives such as grants and tax breaks.

A common approach has been to address the relevance and importance of self-reported skills and traits of police officer's performance on duty. The criteria used in the selection of applicants are often based on existing notions about requirements to do a good job in law enforcement. However, the relevance of these criteria has been rarely investigated from the perspective of professionals within law enforcement organizations. Generally, such investigations have focused on American police chiefs and police departments 'ratings of various criteria'. The importance of police suitability has gained more attention due to the high-profile shootings involving a police officer within a vulnerable community. Corey et al. (2018) argued that many departments currently use the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)

to determine police suitability. However, there is limited literature on how effective this measure is in predicting police performance. They concluded that there is a negative correlation between the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) and post-employment behavior, specifically the correlation between scores on the externalize scale and police behavior (Corey et al., 2018). The recruiting approach of using self-reporting methods, resumes, and personal references may result in neglecting to evaluate for skills that are crucial to police work. As present, there is little evidence to suggest that officers self-reporting methods and resume credentials are accurate predictors of job performance. Moreover, it is also unclear whether work experience in a related field (e.g., military experience) is linked to improved performance among police officers.

Police department recruiting efforts tend to focus on military personnel and veterans. Military influence has been around since the 1900s when law enforcement officials needed to be separate from political influences (Patterson, 2002). The police workforce and the military can be seen as an organization with similar attributes in that they both have similar rank structures, handle weapons and are servants of the communities. Shernock (2017) argued that there is a misconception that the military has an influence on police work and that military experience can bring positive attributes to a police force, such as creative thinking, individual initiative, command and control principles. These attributes can be seen as attractive to a police department that require highly disciplined individuals that have a record of overcoming challenges.

Police departments often incentivize former military personal to seek employment as an officer by offering points toward their test scores and promotions

in their career (Patterson, 2002). To date, there is limited evidence on the appropriateness of military attributes for employment roles in which the rules of engagement are different than those in military combat. For example, Ivie and Gardland (2011) found that exposure to trauma influenced burnout in all officers, regardless of military experience. This finding suggests that former military personnel may not offer any greater benefits to police work relative to individuals without military experience. Although the military population continues to be a target of recruitment efforts, people with a background in the military may not be able to overcome the challenges of burnout and trauma exposure any better than personnel recruited from the citizen population. The work of a police officer includes basic duties, such as traffic control and crime investigation, as well as critical incidents, such as firing their weapon at a human being. Along with these duties, the scrutiny of the public and the policies created by leadership can be overwhelming for a police officer. Targeting an individual that can overcome these job challenges can be difficult; therefore, law enforcement agencies tend to seek individuals that may have the skills to perform effectively in high-stress environment of law enforcement.

Military considerations

In the last two decades, there has been an increase of military mobilization in the United States that has fostered constant change and adjustment to those serving in the United States Military. In the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, more than 2.5 million military personnel have been deployed since 2001 (Elnitsky et al., 2017). The demands of the military have increased as the enemy adapts to current tactics and development of new targets. Most of these changes in mobilization have taken a toll on those serving their country. According to Elnitsky et al. (2017), one-third of those

deployed to the war in Iraq and Afghanistan have a deployment-related disability. Beyond combat-related losses, the military population often experiences additional challenges, such as in returning home in a different mental and/or physical state. As such, although though military service is often depicted as a noble and honorable cause, there are numerous disadvantages and consequences related to serving.

The disadvantages of post-deployment service can be sought both in behavioral issues and the reintegrating of military servicemen into the community. The reserve component of the military also faces similar challenges. According to Ursano et al. (2018) almost 40% of military personnel deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom were from the reserve components. Many would argue that active duty gets the worst of wars; however, the reservists face the same challenges post-deployment. In the same article, Ursano et al. (2018) noted that the reservists in the Armed Forces are at risk of behavior problems and post-traumatic stress disorder after being deployed.

The military is now facing a reduction in its service members, as the Department of Defense has shut down bases overseas and is disengaging with overseas conflicts (e.g., Afghanistan) that have been ongoing for the last two decades (Sportsman & Thomas, 2015). Specifically, the military has suffered about a 25% reduction in service members, including both voluntarily and involuntarily military separation (Bergman & Herd, 2017). Bergman and Herd (2017) argued that veterans returning home and reintegrating back to a civilian workforce face challenges in obtaining higher education and identifying how to use military skills in the civilian sector. Although efforts to hire more veterans has been vital to re-integration efforts in the U.S., veterans often experience challenges in choosing a job or career path. Many

veterans seek jobs similar to their career in the military. This approach can be a challenge for veterans that have only been in combat-related career fields. However, combat related skills can be useful in careers such as law enforcement or other first responder employment contexts.

Veterans not only struggle with career paths but also struggles with their internal psychological challenges like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The evidence of psychological trauma of post-military services is evident when veterans return to their communities. Psychological challenges experience by veterans like PTSD, resiliency, moral injury, and substance abuse are just a few of the many obstacles' veterans have to face after their military service. According to Elnitsky and Kilmer (2017) the re-integration of veterans has been a national priority for federal, state and local officials. This calls for constant engagement between communities, politicians and families in order to provide the resources needed for veterans. The idea is not that the military is sick post-military service but to note that veterans may have underlining issues yet untreated or managed; therefore, resources should be in place to address these challenges when they arise. The need for resources is a constant challenge for many agencies targeting military veterans.

The mental challenges of post-deployment can impact families, communities, and the overall mental stability of a military veteran. Gil-Rivas et al. (2017) noted that out of those deploying to war, 55.2% of military service members are married and 42.8% have children. As such, the challenges of the military affect not only the service members, but also the spouses and children who often contend with their loved one being away for deployment and training. Lahav, Renshaw and Solomon (2019) noted that spouses of veterans experience psychological problems such as

emotional stress related to being a caregiver; this stress is often related to having more responsibility in the household and changing roles within the family while caring for the veteran.

Elnitsky and Kilmer (2017) describe reintegration as a personal, dynamic and culturally process that involves the connection between the individual and his/her environment. Currently, there is no time frame determined when a veteran is “fully” back to normal. However, resiliency seems to be an important factor in understanding a veteran’s adjustment to civilian life. Greenberg et al. (2019) described resiliency as the function of optimism, self-efficacy, and coping skills with social and spiritual support. Scholars argue that resiliency is both an inherit skill and a learned skill through intervention methods (Greenberg et al., 2019). According to Aaron, Catherine and Kimberly (2016), the resiliency mechanism within veterans is lower than in the non-veteran population. Some scholars argue that veterans may struggle with resiliency, especially in the case of moral injury (Wisco et al., 2017). Kelley et al. (2019) noted that many veteran face “moral injury” which prone for many veterans to feel guilt and shame. Moral injury refers to traumatic events that affects one’s judgment and moral stand (Kelley et al., 2019). Examples of causes of moral injury can be the betrayal of leadership, friendly fire, inability to save a life or kill someone or experience of woman and children being used in war. Kelley et al. (2019) argue that the core symptoms of moral injury are guilt and shame. These symptoms along with the inability to cope can be detrimental to a veteran re-intergrading back into society.

Sherman (2014) notes that moral injury is also present in non-combat situations where the inability to fight an enemy can also cause guilt and shame for

soldiers that served and are trained to attack an enemy. Moral injury can affect combat and non-combat personnel who are asked to perform a task that contradicts their moral judgment, the effects of which can remain unresolved due to ongoing involvement in military-related duties and the military culture that espouses minimization of traumatic events and the implications of such. Sherman (2014) goes to indicate that many soldiers returning from war have not dealt with their guilt and shame and often continue without resolving distress linked to their moral injuries. Military service, both those who served in combat and those without combat experience, may suffer from the distress associated with moral injury after military service has concluded.

Compassion in the Military

Military service can be overwhelming for many that are not ready for the ultimate sacrifices or the constant changes in military operations. According to Taylor et al. (2015), the major reasons most individuals join the military are to gain full employment, acquire educational benefits, and out of a desire to serve their country. The disadvantages and advantages of serving in the military vary for every person. Taylor et al., (2015) divides the reasoning to join or remain in the military into two categories; institutional, that is the idea of civil service and occupational purpose as it relates to the salary and military benefits. In the process of joining, many do not realize the psychological preparedness needed to be a soldier and the effect it has on one's personal life. Sometimes, these challenges are in the form of moral instability, psychological control, and resiliency based on experiences of serving during war. Nevertheless, service members are trained to be soldiers, which includes shooting a weapon, dealing with strange cultures, and maintaining cohesion with fellow

comrades. The challenges can be overwhelming for military personnel, and as such, can affect psychological functioning and characteristics of those who serve in the military. One area that appears to be particularly susceptible to influence with military experience is one's compassion toward others.

In military culture, compassion is not a subject in the rules of war or is a topic when there is a mission to complete against an enemy, but the elements of compassion are challenged when a service member goes through the experience of pointing a weapon at an enemy or a civilian in distress during war. Ramon, Guthrie, and Rochester (2019) indicate that military servicemen experience traditional masculinity norms such as self-reliance, limited emotionality, power, control, physical toughness and anti-femininity. Moreover, Ramon et al. (2019) argued that challenges exist in treating mental health issues of military personnel because the military culture that adheres to traditional masculinity norms.

The military service can benefit from traditional masculinity norms in that it can build tougher and more reliable soldiers, but it is unknown how this culture might affect compassion. According to Brickell et al. (2017), females are now at the same risk of combat exposure as males due to the inclusion of females in combat-related fields. This suggests that females are subject to the masculine norms in the military culture at all levels to include in combat. In 2013, the Department of Defense (DOD) reported a 14.9% of active-duty personnel were females and 18.5% of the military reserve force were females (Brickell et. al., 2017). Compassion is not an emphasized characteristic when facing an enemy or defending one's country, and it is currently unknown how experiences like combat exposure affect compassion among all military personnel. Thus, more research is needed to understand how traditional norms,

military training, and combat exposure during military service impact psychological characteristics such as compassion.

The element of “act” in exhibiting compassion toward someone suffering can be a complicated situation for a soldier observing the enemy and a comrade suffering. During these circumstances, military personnel are trained to examine and deal with each situation differently. In one study, Senecal et al. (2019) argued that veteran care should be understood through the lifestyle of a combat veteran, which can include violent tendencies, the adrenaline rush of combat, peer connection related to violent situations, and psychosomatic energy derived from acts of war. The culture within the military tends to emphasize ignorance toward the suffering of enemies, with little emphasis on remorse toward enemies (Seidler, 2015). The remorse that is more frequently encouraged in military culture is related to the loss of the life of fellow comrades. The outcomes of a war not only affect the attitudes of military personnel toward humankind, but it also affects a soldier’s moral judgment and psychological characteristics (Wortmann et al., 2017). The concept of compassion is closely connected to the extent to which one is compassionate to the self.

According to Neff (2003), the capacity to experience compassion for others is contingent on whether one is first able to experience compassion for oneself. Offering some support for this, Hiraoka et al. (2015) found that a lack of self-compassion is associated with the development of PTSD, which has several negative implications for interpersonal relations. In a study, Hiraoka et al. (2015) found that low levels of compassion for others are associated with higher levels of PTSD in veterans returning from war. Thus, the traumatic events of war create a long-term problem for many veterans returning home. Dahm et al. (2015) noted that there is a need for

improvements in treating PTSD approaches. One treatment that has gathered increasing attention is that of Mindfulness and Self-Compassion (Dahm et al., 2015). Mindfulness refers to the ability to relate to the present moment and not relieving the past of previous thoughts. Self-compassion relates to understanding one one-self emotion and feelings during hard times. Dahm et al. (2015) noted that mindfulness and self-compassion not only promote healing from symptoms of PTSD, but it also helps to diminish emotional and physical distress. This, in turn, is likely to contribute positively to a person's ability to experience compassion for others. Overall, there is concern about the lack of compassion for veterans with PTSD returning from war, and there appear to be appropriate approaches (e.g., mindfulness and self-compassion) that could assist returning veterans to integrate themselves into their communities better.

Empathy in the Military

In the military, the concept of empathy has two faces. Military personnel are trained to offer support and protect their fellow servicemen during training and in combat (Cutright, 2019), which requires some degree of empathy. On the other hand, military culture tends to prioritize avoidance of empathy for enemies while preparing for, engaging in, and in the aftermath of combat. Thus, while there may be opportunities to experience empathy in the context of combat or war (e.g., enemy surrender, encounters with civilian victims of war), those opportunities tend to be overlooked because of how the underlying military culture influences interactions of military personnel with those who are not a member of their own military force.

In one study on empathy in military personnel, Trujillo et al. (2017). concluded that combat veterans of Colombian paramilitary and guerilla soldiers

showed low levels of empathy and had difficulties connecting with others' feelings and emotions. In most definitions of empathy, empathy does not constitute the actions of care, but it influences sympathetic concern or compassionate care (Cutright, 2019). It is clear that social connection, or the ability to try to place oneself in the shoes of the person who is suffering, is common in our society. In the military, however, this can be complicated as war can evoke negative attitudes and emotions toward the enemy (Trujillo et al., 2017). Therefore, empathy can be represented in a multifaceted concept within military culture, and both the negative and positive impacts must be acknowledged and understood fully.

In the military, emotions and feelings tend to be managed differently in the context of facing an enemy. More research is needed to investigate how empathy, or a lack of empathy affects the long-term mental health of soldier's post-military service. Although empathy emphasizes the ability to understand others, it does not necessarily lead to a caring action (i.e., compassion). Progression from empathy to a compassionate response can be impacted by the consequences of combat exposure or other traumatic events experience by military soldiers. According to Trujillo et al. (2017), there has been evidence that combat war veterans of international wars have shown high levels of post-traumatic stress and depression and low levels of empathy. This can be explained by being exposed to traumatic situations, such as the loss of a fellow soldier, civilian casualties, and targeting and eliminating the enemy. Although civilians who enter the military are likely to have some level of empathy, adoption of the culture of the military and the influence of combat exposure over time can erode and have long-term implications for a person's ability to experience empathy.

The pursuit of an enemy is also a complex idea in a world where cooperation from local civilians can help an army achieve the objective. Curtright (2019) noted that the U.S has emphasized the importance of cultural training in ways that allow soldiers to understand the culture of the enemy. The cultural training may include some elements of empathy, but the main purpose is to gain cooperation and trust from local civilians, rather than to demonstrate care. In the same field of cultural training, Curtright (2019) argues that soldiers are not trained to pursue a population that, at the same time, is being coerced by the outcomes of war. In some situations, soldiers are conflicted when elements of empathy are necessary for productive civilian interactions and at the same time, they must prioritize the ultimate goal of eliminating the enemy. There is little room for empathy when soldiers are facing an enemy in contexts where civilian threats also exist (e.g., suicide bombers). The inability to predict traumatic events, such as suicide bombers in wars and civilian combatants, can detract from empathy when at war. Therefore, there is great concern about how empathy decreases throughout military service.

Friedman (2015) used the term “matrix” to refer to the network of connections we have from our experiences at one point in our lives. The “Soldier’s Matrix” is an example of how the military is impacted by the experience of war (Friedman, 2015). In the “Soldier’s Matrix,” everything is connected, including the gestures of the enemy, civilians, military culture, and the actions of ending a life. Challenges with pursuing empathy occurs when switching from an unarmed civilian to a soldier who is sent out to kill. Within this scope, Friedman (2015) argues that soldiers experience long-term psychological effects that can impact one’s self-identity. Selfier (2015) noted that the “Soldier’s Matrix” is responsible for the reduction of feelings and

emotion that makes us human, such as empathy, guilt, and shame. In the military, many veterans take up the challenge of entering the “matrix” by deciding to become a soldier, leaving behind old habits, religious practice, and family traditions. Once an individual enters the “Soldier’s Matrix,” a soldier is given a uniform and a rank shares an enemy with others, is given a new set of rules and regulations, and is taught to put service before oneself. The new soldier not only becomes a new person but also contemplates their attitudes toward and inner beliefs about humanity.

The Present Study

Ongoing research is necessary to continue improving the recruiting and in-service training of law enforcement personnel, including identifying the salience of psychological and behavioral characteristics that could enhance performance. The present study focuses on exploring differences in levels of compassion and empathy between police officers who have prior military experience and those who do not. An improved understanding of these differences is important because it might assist law enforcement agencies in identifying whether military service hinders or enhances law enforcement duties. The current law enforcement recruitment practices favor military personnel, as it gives those who have served overseas a chance to continue serving by protecting and serving their local communities. War and military combat have impacted many veterans in various ways, both physically and mentally. Behaviors such as aggression, ethical decision making, poor self-control, and emotional numbness can be part of the consequences of war. According to Corey et al. (2018), externalized behaviors, such as aggression and ethical decision making, are a crucial component of police recruiting. Therefore, it is important to identify in police

applicants some of the key psychological and behavioral characteristics that might influence whether these kinds of behaviors manifest.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1 (RQ1): Is there a difference in empathy levels between police officers with and without military service?

Null Hypothesis (H_01): There is no difference in empathy levels between police officers with and without military service.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_11): There is a difference in empathy levels between police officers with and without military service.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): Is there a difference in compassion levels between police officers with and without military service?

Null Hypothesis (H_02): There is no difference in compassion levels between police officers with and without military service.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_12): There is a difference in compassion levels between police officers with and without military service.

Research Question 3 (RQ3): Is the association between law enforcement experience and empathy moderated by prior military experience?

Null Hypothesis (H_03): The association between law enforcement experience and empathy is not moderated by prior military experience.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_13): The association between law enforcement experience and empathy is moderated by prior military experience.

Research Question 4 (RQ4): Is the association between law enforcement experience and compassion moderated by prior military experience?

Null Hypothesis (H_04): The association between law enforcement experience and compassion is not moderated by prior military experience.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_14): The association between law enforcement experience and compassion is moderated by prior military experience.

Summary

There are several areas in which military vocations and police work are similar (e.g., rank, discipline). Because of these similarities, military personnel are often prioritized for selection as law enforcement personnel, but there are key distinctions in the training, kind of work, and employment-related experiences that people have when in each of these roles. For military personnel, exposure to combat and contexts of war can impact psychological health and erode psychological characteristics (e.g., empathy, compassion) that influence the quality of social interactions with all kinds of people (e.g., civilians, family, community members). Although military personnel may possess the kinds of skills and background experience that could assist them in their role as a law enforcement officer, their military experience may also have negative implications for their capacity to execute their functions as a police officer. Thus, prioritizing military personnel may result in hiring applicants who are highly skilled in weapons use and executing appropriate tactics in dangerous and high-pressure situations, but may lead to hiring personnel who do not have the necessary psychosocial skills that are needed for effectively performing community policing activities. Two skills that appear to be particularly important for comprehensively executing policing activities in an efficient way are empathy and compassion, both of which can negatively be affected by military experience

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

Chapter 2 offered a review of existing literature on empathy and compassion in first responders, explored the effects of military experience on empathy and compassion, and identified the challenges law enforcement personnel with military experience might have in exhibiting empathy and compassion during the course of their work. Based on the literature reviewed, it became apparent that military veterans who take roles in law enforcement may be at higher risk of lower empathy and compassion, which may have negative implications for effectively executing performance-related tasks while interacting with civilians, witnesses, victims, and perpetrators. To examine this notion further, this study aimed to understand empathy and compassion levels of those police officers who have served in the military and draw comparisons with police officers who have not. The findings of this study are likely to further our understanding of how military service impacts empathy and compassion in police officers, as compared to police officers without prior military experience.

This chapter provides the methodological approach that was used to conduct the study. The primary focus of this study was to identify whether differences in empathy and compassion and empathy exist between police officers who have military experience and those who do not. The primary independent variable was categorical with two levels; police officers with prior military experience and police officers who have never served in the military. A secondary independent variable was years of law enforcement experience. The dependent variables were compassion and empathy.

Research Design and Rationale

The research was conducted using a cross-sectional quantitative approach that used self-report data collected from current law enforcement personnel with either do or do not have prior military experience. A quantitative approach is most suitable to achieve the aims of this study, as it offered objective evidence of the constructs of interest (i.e., empathy and compassion) and it allowed for key comparisons to be made between police officers without and without prior military experience.

Comparative analyses were performed to identify whether differences in empathy and compassion exist between police officers with and without prior military experience.

This type of research approach was used to execute the aims of this study and was appropriate because limited evidence on empathy and compassion in police officers is available and the findings of this study would be an important first step to understanding whether empathy and compassion vary among police officers based on their previous military experience (or lack thereof).

The study design is also beneficial because it was considered important to be able to generalize the findings to a broader group of police officers beyond the sample under investigation. Other kinds of approaches, such as qualitative methods, would have limited the capacity to generalize the findings to police officers that were not included in this study. The use of a quantitative approach also enables replication, which is critical to identifying whether the trends that emerge in this study also exist in other samples of police officers, particularly cross-culturally. Finally, because the data were collected while police officers are on duty, there was limited time available to obtain their participation. Utilizing a quantitative approach involving a structured questionnaire comprising closed-ended items from standardized and validated

measures minimized the amount of time participants had to allocate to participate in this study, as compared to other more time-consuming approaches. This approach was used and it increased the likelihood of achieving higher response rates.

Data Analysis

Based on the research questions of interest, a series of analyses were performed with the compassion and empathy scales using quantitative approaches. Analyses included independent samples *t* tests and two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests. The independent samples *t* tests were conducted to compare the compassion and empathy levels of police officers with and without prior military experience, whereas the two-way ANOVAs were conducted to determine whether any differences in the compassion and empathy levels of police officers with and without prior military experience varied based on law enforcement experience.

Methodology

The target population for this study included active police officers from a department within the southern region of the United States. The participating agency is located in one of the largest cities in the United States. The participating law enforcement agency employs more than 4,000 police officers, including a police chief, executive chiefs, assistant chiefs, captains, lieutenants, and sergeants. The police department has a large number of patrol divisions that service more than 400 square miles and more than one million citizens. Based on the research questions and corresponding analyses required to assess each, an a priori power analysis was conducted within the parameters of medium effect size with 80% power specified for the analysis that would require the largest sample size (i.e., independent samples *t*-test). This power analysis revealed a total sample size of 128 participants would likely

be sufficient to avoid a Type II error across any of the analyses. The participating agency has a very diverse police force. Approximately 37% of officers self-identify as White, 42% as Black, 18% as Hispanic, and 3% as Asian. Approximately 88% of police officers in the agency are male and 12% are female. The police officers in the department are also well educated, as more than 2,500 police officers have completed a college degree. The police officers used in this research were recruited from five patrol police stations. The research focused on patrol officers instead of investigators and other classified employees. Compared to other investigative units, patrol officers are known to have the most encounters with the public. One of the main functions of a patrol police officer is to interact with the public when people call 911.

The sample participated via a secure, online data collection software system (i.e., SurveyMonkey). A survey was developed in SurveyMonkey and was made accessible via a weblink. The online survey included the electronic consent form, the demographics form, the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), and The Compassion Scale (CS) questionnaire. All eligible participants were invited to participate and received the weblink that contained the survey. I was the only person who had access to the completed surveys and results. Eligible police officers at the agency where the research was conducted were sent the survey weblink by email. The questionnaires were expected to take approximately 8 minutes to complete and consisted of sociodemographic items (e.g., age, sex, prior military experience, law enforcement experience) and psychological measures. Participants were required to provide their consent prior to completing the survey. The online survey was also designed to eliminate officers who did not work in a patrol capacity. Police officers who consented to participate in the study and indicated they were working in a police

patrol capacity were able to continue with the survey and included in the study. Police officers working as detectives or employed in administrative positions were directed to an exit webpage.

Formal permission to conduct this study and access participants was obtained through the Public Affairs Office of the participating agency. A letter of intent was created explaining the research and its purpose, and a copy of the questionnaire was provided to the Public Affairs Office of the participating law enforcement agency. Once the participating law enforcement agency approved the research, the Public Affairs Office sent a weblink to all police officers in the participating agency. The Public Affairs Office of the participating agency asked to remain completely anonymous and requested that any information that could lead to the identification of the agency be omitted from the research materials.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

In this study, a questionnaire was used to measure the variables of interest. The questionnaires included three components: a section containing demographic items, a measure of empathy, and a measure of compassion. The two scales were chosen to assess the primary variables needed for this study. In the sections that follow, further information is provided on the purpose of using each instrument and the psychometric properties (i.e., reliability and validity) of each.

Demographics

Demographic information was asked in a form of a questionnaire included with the two questionnaires. Participants were able to report age, gender, religious preference, education levels, marital status, and income. Other demographics that helped the study were included such as years of employment as a police officer, status

of service in the military and years of previous service in the military. Military reservists were included in this study to include those currently serving in reserve components and State National Guard of all branches. Currently, there are active police officers that are part of reserve components in the military. New officers transitioning from active duty to civilian life with an honorable discharge were included. Gender was not a factor of participation; all genders had the same opportunity to participate. No identifying information was listed in the demographic questionnaire.

Empathy

Empathy was measured using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) developed by Mark H. Davis in 1980. The IRI is a 28-item self-report measure of empathy that consists of four subscales designed to measure empathy in a multidimensional way by assessing both cognitive and emotional aspects of empathy: Perspective Taking (PT), Empathic Concern (EC), Fantasy (FS), and Personal Distress (PD). The PT subscale captures the psychological ability to adapt to the point of view of others, the FS scale measures the ability of participants to associate themselves with the feelings and actions of a fictitious character, the EC subscale measures feelings of sympathy and concern for someone that is experiencing misfortune, and the PD subscale measures feelings of anxiety and tension within interpersonal settings where others are adversely impacted.

The IRI has been used in multiple settings and with various sample types, including police officer culture, military relationships, and police decision making (Dekel et al., 2015; Compton et al., 2011). Several studies have provided evidence supporting the convergent, discriminant, concurrent, and incremental validity of the

IRI (Davis, 1980; Fernández et al., 2011; Pélouquin & Lafontaine, 2010). Reported internal consistency estimates for the subscales of the IRI have ranged between .68 and .84 (Alterman et al., 2003; Dekel et al., 2018; Pélouquin & Lapontaine, 2010). Overall, current research supports the IRI as a psychometrically valid measure of dispositional empathy. The IRI was selected for its strong psychometric properties and the quantity of items. Because participants were police officers who were recruited while on duty, the rate of participation was likely to improved when lower quantities of items were used. Similarly, the use of a self-report measure was beneficial, given that police officers worked different schedules and were able to complete the questionnaire at their own pace as time permits.

The Compassion Scale

The Compassion Scale (CS) was developed by Pommier (2011) and was used with principles used in the Self-Compassion Scale (SC) developed by Neff (2003). The SC was developed with the idea of mindfulness as it relates to the experience of the present and not the past and compassion as it relates to the understanding of others. Pommier (2011) noted that compassion could be measured using similar principles from the SC but focusing more on compassion for others, which are included in the SC. The CS is a 24-item measure with responses ranging from 1 to 5, 1 (*almost never*), and 5 (*almost always*). The compassion scale includes subscales, (a) Kindness, (b) Common humanity, (c) Mindfulness, and (d) Indifferent. Pommier et al. (2020) conducted six studies to narrow down the measuring of compassion, and it resulted in being an adequate scale to measure compassion. The reliability and validity of the CS showed to be efficient to measure the compassion variable. The CS has good internal consistency, validity, and test-retest reliability as it has been used in

other studies and has been shown to be valid (Sousa et al., 2017; Pommier et al., 2020). The CS has shown high reliability through the retest and the Cronbach's alpha scores ranging from .78 to .90 across the multiple studies (Pommier et al., 2020). The CS determined levels of compassion in officers with an easy self-reporting questionnaire that produced results needed to answer the proposed research questions.

Threats to Validity

The study is a cross-sectional and the results was not able to make causal inferences about the associations among the variables. A threat to internal validity could have manifested in the difference of crime rate officers are exposed to the participating law enforcement agency's city. Crimes rates in other police departments may be much lower or minimal. Moreover, these crime rates may impact a police officer's psychological state. Another internal validity threat was the potential large participation of police officers that have been in the police department for a significant amount of time. In this study, years of service in the police department was reported. Detectives or investigators of a police department in most cases are seasoned police veterans who are not part of roll calls or patrol units. Patrol police officers are the main target of the study as it is considered the largest division of a police department. Threats to external validity included that the finding of the study only applies to police officers in patrol units and it excluded detectives and other administrative officers that are not in a patrol capacity in other agencies. It is unknown if the findings apply to other law enforcement agencies like FBI, CIA or smaller police department of a smaller population or smaller police force. Moreover, it is unknown if it applies to other countries where law enforcement agencies manage

police recruiting differently. The particular law enforcement agency in this study was chosen because of its large citizen population and community involvement.

Research Questions

The main focus of this study was to investigate whether there are significant levels of empathy and compassion between officers with and without prior military experience. The research used two psychological instruments to compare the two subcultures within a police department to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): Is there a difference in empathy levels between police officers with and without military service?

Null Hypothesis (H_01): There is no difference in empathy levels between police officers with and without military service.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_11): There is a difference in empathy levels between police officers with and without military service.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): Is there a difference in compassion levels between police officers with and without military service?

Null Hypothesis (H_02): There is no difference in compassion levels between police officers with and without military service.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_12): There is a difference in compassion levels between police officers with and without military service.

Research Question 3 (RQ3): Is the association between law enforcement experience and empathy moderated by prior military experience?

Null Hypothesis (H_03): The association between law enforcement experience and empathy is not moderated by prior military experience.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_{13}): The association between law enforcement experience and empathy is moderated by prior military experience.

Research Question 4 (RQ4): Is the association between law enforcement experience and compassion moderated by prior military experience?

Null Hypothesis (H_{04}): The association between law enforcement experience and compassion is not moderated by prior military experience.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_{14}): The association between law enforcement experience and compassion is moderated by prior military experience.

Ethical Procedures

The American Psychological Association's (2002) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct states that researchers safeguard ethical treatment and protection of participants. Ethical approval was acquired from Walden University IRB prior to initiating this study and collecting any data. This study was conducted in a way that maintains and protects police officers' privacy. Beyond ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, police officers' participation was voluntary; they were given an opportunity to withdraw from the research without any negative consequences. The participating officers were briefed on the paradigms of the research and received an explanation of the rationale for the study through the online consent form. Police officers were not offered any incentive for participating, nor they were penalized for not participating. All participants were informed that they can omit responses to any questions they do not feel comfortable answering. They were also informed that the data collected was only used for research purposes as outlined to them in the informed consent document. Participants may benefit from acquiring a better understanding of their own compassion and empathy levels. A summary of

results is available to participating officers if they request a summary and they were given an opportunity to inquire with the researcher should they have any questions about the results. The participating agency will also have a summary of the results and an explanation of the findings.

Summary

This chapter identifies the research methods used to obtain information regarding the empathy and compassion levels of police officers with and without military experience. The demographics of the target population and its content use were discussed. The research questions were discussed and the method in which they were answered was also discussed. The psychological instruments and questionnaires that were used for this research were also identified in this chapter. The methods in which data was acquired was also discussed. Furthermore, Chapter 4 discussed the results and data analysis conducted to answer the research questions provided in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Results, Analysis, Implications, and Preparation of Findings

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to examine whether there were differences in the compassion and empathy levels of police officers with and without prior military experience. The findings could contribute to the development and refinement of training curricula and provide insight that could be used to inform how law enforcement recruiting is conducted and candidate selection. This chapter begins by reiterating the research questions and hypotheses. Thereafter, it summarizes the data collection procedure and describes the demographics of the participants in this study. After contrasting the characteristics of the sample to the population, the results for each hypothesis are presented and discussed with reference to the relevant research question.

Research Questions

Research Question 1 (RQ1): Is there a difference in empathy levels between police officers with and without military service?

Null Hypothesis (H_01): There is no difference in empathy levels between police officers with and without military service.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_11): There is a difference in empathy levels between police officers with and without military service.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): Is there a difference in compassion levels between police officers with and without military service?

Null Hypothesis (H_02): There is no difference in compassion levels between police officers with and without military service.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_{12}): There is a difference in compassion levels between police officers with and without military service.

Research Question 3 (RQ3): Is the association between law enforcement experience and empathy moderated by prior military experience?

Null Hypothesis (H_{03}): The association between law enforcement experience and empathy is not moderated by prior military experience.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_{13}): The association between law enforcement experience and empathy is moderated by prior military experience.

Research Question 4 (RQ4): Is the association between law enforcement experience and compassion moderated by prior military experience?

Null Hypothesis (H_{04}): The association between law enforcement experience and compassion is not moderated by prior military experience.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_{14}): The association between law enforcement experience and compassion is moderated by prior military experience.

Data Collection

Participants in this study were active police officers from a law enforcement agency located in the Southern region of the United States. Data collection was completed between January and April of 2021. Due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) protocols, data was collected via a survey that was administered using a secure weblink. An online survey was necessary to ensure that data collection adhered to social distancing requirements of the participating law enforcement agency. In order to distribute the survey and collect data, approval by the Public Affairs Office of the participating law

enforcement agency was obtained. An email that contained a weblink to the survey was sent to all police officers in the participating agency.

Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. Participants completed a consent form electronically before completing the survey. Participants had the opportunity to anonymously opt out of the survey at any time without any risk of negative consequences. The survey was distributed as a single continuous survey containing four pages: (a) the consent form, (b) demographic items, (c) the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), and (d) the Compassion Scale (CS). A secure weblink was sent via the Public Affairs Office to the pool of law enforcement personnel who worked at the law enforcement agency. The survey targeted police officers working in a patrol unit capacity, which means that part of their role involved answering 911 calls and working on the streets of the community they serve. Any police officers whose main duties did not involve interacting with the public or other administrative work were excluded from participating. The process of selection and disqualification was considered necessary for capturing the phenomenon of interest in this study.

To participate in the survey, the volunteers had to provide electronic implied consent and anyone who did not consent was directed to the end of the survey. The survey was anonymous, and participants had the opportunity to complete it on their own time and location of preference. Participants had the opportunity to opt-out of the survey or discontinue participation at any time. A total of 300 participants attempted to take the survey, but only 149 indicated they were a police officer working under a patrol unit capacity. The 151 personnel who were not working under a patrol unit capacity were redirected to the end of the survey and did not complete any of the

other survey items. Of the 149 eligible police officers who consented to participate 87% qualified to complete the survey ($N = 129$). There were 65 participants without prior military experience and 64 participants with military experience. A power value of 0.95 was determined based on a G*Power3 power analysis, which has the capability to run a priori power analysis (Faul et al., 2007). The sample size met the recommended minimum priority calculated sample size, which was $n = 64$ police officers with military experience and $n = 64$ police officers without military experience.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

The sample of $N = 129$ participants was demographically diverse. The sociodemographic characteristics of the participants are reported in Tables 1 and 2, which are also disaggregated by prior military service experience. Eighty-six percent of the participants were 24 to 54 years of age. This pattern was consistent across the subsample of police officers who had and did not have prior military service experience. Eighty-four percent of the participants were male. Forty-seven percent of participants identified as White/Caucasian, 26% identified as Hispanic/Latino, 18% of the participants were Black/African American, and 9% reported to be “other race or ethnicity.”

The participants in this study represented approximately 2% to 4% of the patrol officers in the law enforcement agency. The age of the sample was somewhat younger than the population of police officers in the law enforcement agency. The gender ratio of the sample was comparable to that of the population, which is 85% male. The sample was also somewhat consistent with the race/ethnic composition of

the law enforcement agency, where 47% are White, 18% are Black, 18% are Hispanic, and 18% are of “other” race. The difference between the percentage of participants in each demographic category and the population was less than 10%.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Demographics of the Sample

Characteristic	Non-military (<i>n</i> = 65)	Military (<i>n</i> = 64)	Total (<i>N</i> = 129)
Age			
18-24	3	-	3
25-34	24	15	39
35-44	11	23	34
45-54	20	19	39
55+	7	7	14
Gender			
Female	16	4	20
Male	49	60	109
Other	-	-	-
Racial/ethnic status			
White or Caucasian	34	27	61
Black or African American	7	16	23
Hispanic Latino	17	17	34
Asian or Asian American	5	2	7
Other	2	2	4
Educational attainment			
High School	-	11	11
Some College	20	24	44
Bachelors	27	20	47
Graduate Degree	18	9	27
Religious affiliation			
Not religious	6	5	11
Religious	59	59	118

Note. *One participant did not report their income.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Demographics of the Sample

Characteristic	Non-military ($n = 65$)	Military ($n = 64$)	Total ($N = 129$)
Marital status			
Single	18	6	24
Married	41	49	90
Divorced	6	8	14
Widowed	-	1	1
Income*			
\$15,000 to \$29,999	1		1
\$50,000 to \$74,999	11	6	17
\$75,000 to \$99,999	14	25	39
\$100,000+	39	33	72
Years of police service			
0 to 5	21	14	35
6 to 10	11	8	19
11 to 15	8	19	27
16 to 20	8	3	11
21+	17	20	37
Years of military service			
0 to 5	-	27	27
6 to 10	-	24	24
11 to 15	-	5	5
16 to 20	-	4	4
Above 20	-	4	4

Note. *One participant did not report their income. Income pertains to police salary only and no other form of income.

Statistical Analysis of Research Questions

Statistical Assumptions

The assumptions for independent samples t tests were that the distribution of the dependent variables (i.e., compassion and empathy) in each of the law enforcement groups (i.e., with and without prior military experiences) were

approximately normal, there were no gross outliers, and the groups had roughly equal variance on the dependent variables. The assumptions for two-way ANOVAs were that each group has a roughly normal distribution, no gross outliers, and that the groups have roughly equal variance on the dependent variable. These assumptions were adequately met when the data were examined.

The null hypothesis for the first research question was tested using an independent samples *t* test. The descriptive statistics are shown in Table 3. The mean level of empathy was slightly higher among the police officers without prior military experience ($M = 2.01, SD = .39$) compared to police officers with prior military experience ($M = 1.92, SD = .33$). However, the independent samples *t* test showed that there was no significant difference in the mean level of empathy between police officers who did have military experience and those who did not, $t(127) = -1.36, p = .177$. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no difference in the empathy levels of police officers with and without prior military service could not be rejected, and the mean levels of empathy in the two groups were similar. Table 3 presents the descriptive for the subscales of empathy, as assessed by the IRI, for each law enforcement group. A marginal difference was found between the two groups on the personal distress subscale, and a significant difference was found in the empathic concern subscale. In both instances, the police officers without prior military experience scored higher than those with prior military experience.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Empathy by Group

Subscale	Non-military (<i>M</i>)	Military (<i>M</i>)	<i>p</i> -value
Empathy	1.92	2.01	.177
Perspective Taking (PT) (Cognitive Dimension)	2.92	2.79	.28
Empathic Concern (EC) (Emotional Dimension)	2.73	2.49	.03
Fantasy (FS) (Cognitive Dimension)	1.62	1.81	.14
Personal Distress (Emotional Dimension)	.78	.59	.05

Note. *M* = mean.

The second research question's null hypothesis was tested using an independent samples *t* test. The descriptive statistics are shown in Table 4. The mean level of compassion was marginally higher among the police officers without prior military experience ($M = 4.00$, $SD = .46$) compared to police officers with prior military experience ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .51$). However, the independent samples *t* test showed that there was no significant difference in the mean level of compassion between police officers who did have military experience and those who did not, $t(127) = 1.22$, $p = .223$. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no difference in the compassion levels of police officers with and without prior military service could not be rejected. This indicates that the mean levels of compassion in the two groups were similar. Table 4 presents the descriptive for the subscales of compassion, as assessed by the CS, for each law enforcement group. There was a marginal difference between the two groups on the subscale of disengagement, with a higher mean found for the police officers with prior military experience. There was little evidence of differences

between the police officers with and without prior military experience on any of the other compassion subscales.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Compassion by Group

Subscale	Non-military (<i>M</i>)	Military (<i>M</i>)	<i>p</i> -value
Compassion	1.92	2.01	.177
Kindness Items	3.96	3.85	.29
Indifference Items	2.13	2.24	.38
Common humanity	4.27	4.25	.88
Separation	2.14	2.32	.17
Mindfulness	4.13	4.14	.98
Disengagement	2.10	2.29	.08

Note. *M* = mean.

The third research question null hypothesis was tested using a two-way ANOVA which was conducted to determine whether differences in empathy between police officers with and without prior military experience depended on their law enforcement experience.

The midpoint for years of law enforcement experience was set to 15 years, which was selected because it reflects the approximate midpoint of police officers' total career experience. Police officers with more than 15 years of experience were generally near retirement and are considered seasoned veterans of the police force. Compassion and empathy are present in all aspects of police work, including officer-involved shootings, public interviewing, and de-escalating incidents. Research suggests that younger police officers are at higher risk of disciplinary issues (Taylor et al., 2015). Another study found that recruiting older police officers may reduce frequent officer-involved shootings; therefore, the first 15 years of police experience

was considered a useful cutoff point to evaluate whether years of police experience might affect the empathy and/or compassion of police officers (Ridgeway, 2016).

The descriptive statistics for the two-way ANOVA are shown in Table 5. There was no significant interaction between law enforcement experience and prior military experience on empathy, $F(1, 125) = .01, p = .906$, indicating that law enforcement experience did not moderate the association between prior military experience and empathy. Therefore, the null hypothesis that law enforcement experience moderates the association between prior military service and empathy cannot be rejected, which suggests that the mean level of empathy among participants with or without prior military experience did not vary based on whether they had either 1 to 15 years or 16 or more years of law enforcement experience.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Two-way ANOVA with Empathy

Law enforcement experience	Prior military experience	
	No (<i>M</i>)	Yes (<i>M</i>)
1 to 15 years	2.02	1.93
16 or more years	1.99	1.91

Note. *M* = mean.

The hypothesis for the fourth research question was tested using a two-way ANOVA which was conducted to determine whether differences in compassion between police officers with and without prior military experience depended on their law enforcement experience. The descriptive statistics for the two-way ANOVA as shown in Table 6. There was no significant interaction between law enforcement experience and prior military experience on compassion, $F(1, 125) = .86, p = .355$, indicating that law enforcement experience did not moderate the association between

prior military experience and compassion. Therefore, the null hypothesis that law enforcement experience moderates the association between prior military service and compassion cannot be rejected. This also suggests that the mean level of compassion among participants with or without prior military experience did not vary based on whether they had either 1 to 15 years or 16 or more years of law enforcement experience.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Two-way ANOVA with Compassion

Law enforcement experience	Prior military experience	
	No (<i>M</i>)	Yes (<i>M</i>)
1 to 15 years	3.96	3.8
16 or more years	4.06	4.07

Note. *M* = mean.

Further analysis was conducted to address the conclusions of previous research involving career experience by segmenting law enforcement experience into groups of five or fewer years of experience and six or more years (Taylor et al., 2005, Ridgeway, 2016). An independent samples *t*-test was used to compare compassion and empathy levels among those with 1-5 years of police service to those with six or more years of law enforcement experience. Police officers who had served 1-5 years in law enforcement did not differ significantly from those with six or more years of experience on compassion, $t(127) = .54, p = .591$, or empathy, $t(127) = .48, p = .633$. Therefore, the results suggest that compassion and empathy levels among those with 1-5 years of law enforcement experience are comparable to those with 6 or more years of experience.

Summary

The results of the study were obtained by performing a series of statistical tests, namely independent samples *t*-tests and two-way ANOVAs. The analyses provided insights to evaluate the hypotheses of interest in this study. There were several findings that emerged from the analyses. In particular, there was little evidence of a difference in mean levels of overall empathy between police officers with and without military experience. However, there was evidence of a significant difference in the mean levels of empathic concern between police officers with and without military experience, such that police officers who did not have prior military experience scored higher on empathic concern than those who did have prior military experience.

In addition, the results did not support a difference in mean levels of overall compassion between police officers with and without military experience. There was also little evidence to suggest that the association between prior military experience and overall empathy was moderated by law enforcement experience. A similar finding emerged for overall compassion, such that the association between prior military experience and overall compassion was not moderated by law enforcement experience. These results are collectively interpreted in Chapter 5, where the findings of this study are discussed alongside relevant research that exists. The implications and recommendations for future research and practice are also discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Results

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the rationale and primary objectives of this study. Against this backdrop, the key findings of this study and its contribution to the literature on empathy and compassion among law enforcement personnel are discussed. As part of this discussion, the chapter highlights potential avenues for future research and the practical implications of the findings for improving law enforcement training and performance.

Policing is an ongoing priority in society, particularly in places where crime rates are high. Ensuring law enforcement can address crime rates and recruit appropriate police officers to support this endeavor has long been a challenge in the United States. The process of recruiting and training a police officer is complex and time consuming but recruiting individuals who are the best fit for law enforcement can affect whether a police department is effective at maintaining law and order. Within a law enforcement setting, a police officer's ability to display key psychological characteristics, such as compassion and empathy, is a vital part of their overall performance (Johnson et al., 2011).

Despite their practical utility in the field of law enforcement, compassion and empathy are seldom emphasized in the recruiting process. Hence, further research is needed to explore the role of these two psychological characteristics among law enforcement personnel. When recruiting potential police officers, agencies often target former military personnel because these individuals have already received training on skills that are particularly relevant to law enforcement, such as weapon handling and discipline (Don & Brett, 2011). However, military veterans are often

exposed to war and other traumatic events that police officers may not experience, and those experiences have the potential to negatively impact compassion and empathy (Ramon et al., 2019; Trujillo et al., 2017). This quantitative study was conducted to evaluate whether prior military experience might affect the compassion and empathy levels of law enforcement personnel who have previously served in the military. This was achieved by examining differences in compassion and empathy between two groups of police officers, namely those with and without prior military experience. In the next sections the findings of this study were interpreted, limitations highlighted, and recommendations discussed.

Interpretation of the Findings

A total of $N = 129$ police officers participated in this study through an online survey request sent by the participating law enforcement agency via e-mail. Of the 129 participants, 84% were male and 16% were female. In the military group of ($n = 64$); 80% had served between 1 and 10 years in the military, whereas 6% had served over 20 years in the military. Twenty-one percent had been a police officer fewer than 5 years, 8% had served in the military between 11 and 15, and 31% percent had been a police officer for more than 21 years. In the nonmilitary group ($n = 65$), 49% had been a police officer between 1 and 10 years, whereas 26% had served over 20 years as a police officer. Thirty-two percent had been a police officer less than 5 years and 12% had between 11 and 15 years of police service. The sample size was determined sufficient for evaluating the research questions of interest through a GPower3* analysis, which include the following:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): Is there a difference in empathy levels between police officers with and without military service?

Null Hypothesis (H_01): There is no difference in empathy levels between police officers with and without military service.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_11): There is a difference in empathy levels between police officers with and without military service.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): Is there a difference in compassion levels between police officers with and without military service?

Null Hypothesis (H_02): There is no difference in compassion levels between police officers with and without military service.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_12): There is a difference in compassion levels between police officers with and without military service.

Research Question 3 (RQ3): Is the association between law enforcement experience and empathy moderated by prior military experience?

Null Hypothesis (H_03): The association between law enforcement experience and empathy is not moderated by prior military experience.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_13): The association between law enforcement experience and empathy is moderated by prior military experience.

Research Question 4 (RQ4): Is the association between law enforcement experience and compassion moderated by prior military experience?

Null Hypothesis (H_04): The association between law enforcement experience and compassion is not moderated by prior military experience.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_14): The association between law enforcement experience and compassion is moderated by prior military experience.

Research Questions

The analysis of potential differences in overall empathy and each of its four components between the two groups of police officers revealed higher mean scores among the police officers without prior military experience. However, the differences in means of overall empathy between the two groups did not reach statistical significance. When each dimension of empathy was examined separately, there was no statistically significant difference between the means of the groups on perspective taking and fantasy. Police officers without military experience scored significantly higher on empathic concern and marginally significantly higher on personal distress. Although the findings did not offer complete support for Null Hypothesis (H_01), there was modest evidence suggesting that police officers without military experience tend to score higher on some dimensions of empathy compared to those with prior military experience.

These findings are consistent with some research that has found that prior military service is associated with lower levels of empathy (Trujillo et al., 2017). However, the findings of this study did not provide robust evidence of lower levels of empathy among police officers with military experience, which contrasts the findings of previous research. Friedman (2015) discussed how trauma and exposure to combat affects veterans and their willingness to care or show empathy, suggesting that veterans might score lower in empathy because of their experiences in the military (e.g., exposure to war).

There are explanations for why some areas of empathy, such as Empathetic concern (EC) and Personal distress (PD), are different between police officers with and without military experience. One area that is relevant pertains to previous mental

conditioning training in combat veterans, which is often focused on eliminating one's enemy (Cutright, 2019; Trujillo et al., 2017). Trujillo et al. (2017) suggested that combat veterans tend to be less concerned for the feelings of others and have lower empathy levels compared civilians.

As the concern for the enemy's well-being is minimal in combat settings (Freidman, 2015), police officers with military experience may join police departments with a similar mindset, which could affect how they perform their law enforcement duties in the field. Cutright (2019) noted that veterans do not prioritize care for those with whom they are at war; rather, they prioritize the mission and target of the enemy. This suggests that empathy for enemies is not a prioritized in the military, which could lead to lower levels of empathy among military personnel (Friedman, 2015).

In the PD subscale, combat experience and strict military training would suggest that police officers with military experience are prone to have more control of situations, both in combat and non-combat settings. In contrast, police officers without military experience may have no experience as many traumatic event as military personnel who return from a war (Johnson et al., 2014). Lack of military experience does not necessarily indicate that trauma is not experienced, but it differentiates the level of exposure between officers with and without military experience. (Johnson et al., 2014). Moreover, a lack of prior military experience only suggests that those joining police departments are not likely to have experienced traumatic events involving war. Johnson et al. (2014) concluded that students entering college with military experience showed elevated rates of hostility and family concerns compared to students without military experience. Police officers with no

military experience may come from career backgrounds that are less strict, disciplined, or focused on skill specific training or trades.

There was no significant difference in Perspective Taking (PT) and Fantasy (FS) subscale within this analysis. Potential reasons for this may point to the years of service between the two police group populations. The PT subscale referred to the concept of understanding others and stepping “outside of oneself.” On the other hand, the FS subscale refers to the idea of putting oneself in a different dimension, which can come in the form of scenarios or situations. Police officers with and without prior military experience did not differ on these two subscales. One potential explanation for this finding could be the similarities of both career fields. The two career fields require individuals to deal with an enemy or a particulate type of community. Work experiences that affect the PT and FS facets might be common in both career fields. For example, both careers share training and work-related experiences, as both fields require individuals to serve a purpose and to defend and aid individuals.

Compassion plays an important role in police work as it gives others the feeling of being cared for and safe (Masood et al., 2017). The results indicated that there was no significant difference in compassion between police officers with and without military experience. Although the mean score was higher in those without military experience, it was not significantly higher than participants with military experience. One potential explanation for this could be exposure to traumatic events faced by both career fields, as police officers who do not have military experience may also face traumatic situations that could affect their compassion in a way that is similar to police officers who experienced comparable events during their time as a

military professional. This may also be the case for other first responders, such as emergency room nurses and doctors.

The Compassion Scale (CS), like the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), has multiple subscales that analyze different dimensions of compassion. The findings indicated that there was no significant difference in the six subscales addressing different elements of compassion. One potential explanation for this pattern of findings is that both career fields experience suffering during their careers, whether it is a war overseas or a police officer responding to a shooting. As discussed in the literature review, exposure to trauma in both police work and military service is almost inevitable because both careers have similar demands and work-related experiences within each sometimes overlap (Ramon et al., 2019; Tuttle et al., 2019). Within military service, compassion tendency is a fundamental characteristic of joining a group that protects people, not only domestically but also abroad. Even in international settings, military personnel experience compassion as they deal with communities at war with minimal resources. Police officers answer calls for service to situations in similar settings and where suffering is observed. Hence, individuals in both the military and law enforcement positions may be likely to experience traumatic or challenging circumstances that can affect compassion, which might explain the lack of a difference in compassion between police officers with and without prior military experience.

Contrary to what was expected, there was no evidence in support of law enforcement experience as a moderator of the association between prior military experience and empathy. There could be several potential reasons for this finding, including similar levels of trauma exposure among police officers, regardless of their

prior military experience. Over many years of law enforcement experience, it is possible that the differences in empathy between officers with and without prior military experience dissipates with time. This resonates with the floor effect, which would potentially mean that police officers without prior military experience may appear more similar to those with prior military experience over time because they may begin their law enforcement career with higher empathy and therefore have more capacity to decline in empathy as their law enforcement experience ensues. In addition, the findings could be due to the cross-sectional data, which can obscure true effects because the direction of association between variables is indeterminable.

The study was not able to find any moderation as it relates to compassion. There was no evidence in support of law enforcement experience as a moderator of the association between prior military experience and compassion. There are a few areas to consider when addressing the lack of evidence supporting the lack of moderation. One area to consider is the number of years of police service included in the sample. Approximately 60% of the participants had less than 15 years of police service. This excluded the other 40% of police officers with more police experience. Another potential explanation of the lack of difference in the moderation analysis is the fundamental duty of police officers to help others in difficult situations. Therefore, there is a possibility that compassion is built simultaneously within police officers with and without military experience.

In Chapter 2, it was necessary to address that trauma experienced in the military service can be detrimental to the mental health of military veterans. Due to similar challenges in police work, those without military experience over the years may develop the same compassion levels as those with military experience.

Limitations of Study

Specialized Units

There were several limitations discovered during the study. One major limitation was that not all police officers were included in the study. The research focused only on police officers that worked in a street patrol capacity. Police officers in specialized units such as the mental health unit and police detectives were omitted and disqualified from the survey. As mentioned in Chapter 1, elements of compassion and empathy are used in police detectives interviewing victims and suspects (Oxburgh & Ost, 2011). The Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) specialized unit for example, has hostage negotiators that uses elements of compassion and empathy to interact with suspects. Police officers working directly with subjects in mental crisis were also not included in this study. As mentioned in Chapter 1, citizen with mental health issues continue to be a challenge for police officers encountering them (Todak & James, 2018). Training and other forms of educations in dealing with persons with mental health issues continues to evolve and improve over the years.

Combat Experience

Another limitation of this study was that police officers with military experience did not report combat experience. As mentioned in Chapter 2, literature suggest that combat veterans face interpersonal challenges due to the traumas of deployment and combat events during deployments (Elnitsky & Kilmer, 2017; Greenberg et al., 2019). It was unknown how many police officers of the sample size had combat experience in their previous military service. Another limitation of the study was that police officers with military experience did not report the number of deployments completed during military service. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the

deployment tempo over the years have been a concern as veterans returned from war and have tried to integrate into civilian life (Sherman, 2014; Hiraoka et al., 2015). In Chapter 1, it was noted that combat experience has an impact in the mental health of veterans entering the civilian population; therefore, the reporting of combat experience could have provided further knowledge in the comparison between officers with military experience and officers without military experience.

Career Challenges

Another limitation was that police officers that participated did not report any career challenges related to disciplinary and filed complaints. As mentioned in Chapter 2, police service satisfaction is measured from the perception of the community through police officer interactions (Rosenbaum et al., 2017). Within the same scope of community interaction, the lack of compassion and empathy can be determined by unfavorable and favorable interaction (Rosenbaum et al., 2017). A limitation of this study was that both police officer subgroups did not report their career challenges in this study. Reporting career challenges could have provided a different perspective into community relations in connection to compassion and empathy measures between police officers with and without military experience.

Patrol Setting

A limitation to consider was the setting in which patrol officers took their survey. Patrol police officers who completed this survey could have lacked attention to the questions due to their active duties as patrol officers, requiring them to answer calls for service at a moment's notice. Police officers could face time constraints due to shift needs and the high volume of 911 calls in a patrol capacity. The participating police department can potentially have high call volumes during the survey

distribution; therefore, there could have been times where the patrol shift was busy, which could trigger a rush response to the online survey.

Recommendations

Law enforcement agencies that are constantly engaging with the public should consider critical elements that help law enforcement agencies bridge the gap in the community and maintain positive relationships. Although this study did not find any significance in compassion and empathy between two subgroups of police officers, research is still needed to address previous literature that suggests that there are ways that compassion and empathy are affected by military experience.

As discussed in Chapter 2, compassion, and empathy play an important role in community interactions; therefore, further research can be targeted to all police officers regardless of their role while serving the community. Future research can target units that deal with victims and their loved ones, such as homicide detectives and detectives dealing with crimes against children. With the limitations mentioned in this study, future research can compare compassion and empathy between agencies facing different crime volumes. As a result, a varying perspective on the potential impact of compassion and empathy can be discovered.

One recommendation of this study is to consider comparing levels of compassion and empathy between police departments who experience low levels of crimes and low levels of 911 calls. Due to the potential of high crime levels in the law enforcement agency in this study, it is unknown if high crime rates impact all police officers similarly in compassion and empathy. Moreover, comparing compassion and empathy levels between law enforcement agencies with different crime rates can provide insight into trauma exposure frequency and their impact on compassion and

empathy. Currently, this study suggests that there are minor and marginal differences in empathy in the sample size; therefore, these interpersonal constructs should be part of the conversation when reevaluating community relationships and recruitment targets.

More research is needed to target different areas of empathy in police work, such as personal distress and empathetic concern. The subscales used in the Impersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) and the Compassion Scale (CS) suggested that both constructs of empathy and compassion can be examined from a multi-level approach. For example, high levels of PD in the IRI can represent a negative characteristic for an officer handling a chaotic scene. Future research can analyze favorable elements of empathy in police work and potential unfavorable elements such as PD. One recommendation is to further include compassion and empathy in the conversation of recruiting suitable police officers, with those elements needed to do police work. Conventional recruitment should continue to improve and include crucial attributes such as compassion and empathy in the selection process. As the instruments of compassion and empathy come to light, other instruments should be developed to access these concepts from a multifaceted perspective.

Addressing empathy in a multi-dimensional approach can assist in developing practical training that targets areas of empathy needed for day-to-day police work. Evaluating and balancing empathy elements such as empathetic concern and personal distress can mold a more effective individual to do police work. Moreover, addressing a lack of empathic concern and personal distress in police officers could be a helpful way of improving community engagement and rapport. Improving community

relations can be done if empathy is valued as an important factor for police interpersonal relations with communities.

Implications

Even though there were no significant differences in compassion or empathy, it is essential to reexamine the recruiting process of potential candidates' police agencies are recruiting. Further, it is safe to say that our soldiers are not all “sick” and from this study, we can suggest that veterans can overcome the concerns raised from serving in the military (Seidler, 2015). The negative perceptions of the integration of military veterans into the general public can be reevaluated with studies like the one conducted in this research. Considering some of the recent high-profile police shootings, it is imperative to address community relations from all avenues and evaluate empathy and compassion levels among police officers (Turchan, 2021). As discussed in this research compassion and empathy have multiple elements that can negatively and positively impact interpersonal interactions. For example, empathy can be further researched from a multi-level approach such as the subscales from the IRI. In this manner, further research can focus on favorable elements of empathy needed for police work. Personal Distress (PD) for example, is an element of empathy, but when introduced into police work, it can suggest that lower levels of Personal Distress (PD) is needed in order for a police officer to handle chaotic scenes.

The research of empathy and compassion should continue to expand in areas where cooperation from the public is essential. Empathy and compassion should be included in all levels of police work; from recruiting practices to the retraining of those who score lower or high levels of compassion and empathy. This research and the literature review of current data can influence further conversation to address the

current law enforcement climate. Compassion and empathy are constructs that everyone experiences in their life, from communicating with children to helping a stranger in need. The importance of compassion and empathy is evident in all forms of communication; therefore, police work should further consider the importance of these two attributes in their training, recruitment, and retention practices.

Conclusion

Police officers in today's society have been under great scrutiny with recent high-profile officer-involved shootings. These events have moved the nation and called for a review of all practices in the law enforcement career field. The law enforcement career field is constantly changing police policy, training and procedures related to the interaction with the public to include fundamental changes in the use of force. One key component that will always be present in law enforcement is interaction with individuals from all walks of life. The need for police officers in our society will remain consistent and the need for trust in the community is always essential to public service. Research is necessary to continue discovering ways to improve law enforcement's quality of service and improve interactions with the community.

Even though there were no significant findings in compassion and empathy, some borderline differences in other areas suggested that research needs to improve and more research is needed. Police officers continue to face challenges in maintaining social order by enforcing laws and improving relationships with those they serve. As mentioned in previous chapters, empathy and compassion are part of police work, whether directly or indirectly. Empathy and compassion should be key components to relational policing in our society and should be researched further.

In addition, it is safe to conclude through this research that veterans can function effectively even after military service in stressful jobs like law enforcement. Moreover, compassion and empathy are also essential components to study in military culture and post-military service. As mentioned in this study, traumatic events in war and police critical incidents can impact an individual's mental health. The study completed suggests that veterans continue to serve their communities under similar capacity that also exposes veterans to more trauma, such as serving in a community with high crime levels. The trauma exposure of war may not be the same as those experienced by police officers, but the loss of human life and high-stress levels of a job are almost similar in police work.

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Appendix A: Demographics Questionnaire

What is your age?

- A. 18-24
- B. 25-34
- C. 35-44
- D. 45-54
- E. 55+

What is your gender?

- A. Female
- B. Male
- C. Other

What is your race?

- A. White or Caucasian
- B. Black or African American
- C. Asian or Asian American
- D. Hispanic Latino
- E. Other

What is your combined annual household income?

- A. \$15,000 to \$29,999
- B. \$30,000 to \$49,999
- C. \$50,000 to \$74,999
- D. \$75,000 to \$99,999
- E. \$100,000+

How many years you served in the military?

- A. 0 to 5
- B. 6 to 10
- C. 11 to 15
- D. 16 to 20
- E. 21+

How many years have you served as a police officer?

- A. 0 to 5
- B. 6 to 10
- C. 11 to 15
- D. 16 to 20
- E. 21+

What is your marital status?

- A. Single

- B. Married
- C. Divorce
- D. Widow

What is your highest level of education completed?

- A. High school
- B. Some college
- C. Bachelors
- D. Graduate Degree

What is your religion?

- Baptist
- Pentecostal
- Methodist
- Presbyterian
- Non-denominational Christian
- Other Christian
- Catholic
- Unitarian Universalist
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Indigenous religion
- Afro Cuban
- Other religion
- I am spiritual but not religious
- Not religious or spiritual

Appendix B: Questionnaire # 1 Compassion Scale

HOW I TYPICALLY ACT TOWARDS OTHERS

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often do you feel or behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

Mostly Never**Almost Always****1****2****3****4****5**

- ____ 1. When people cry in front of me, I often don't feel anything at all.
- ____ 2. Sometimes when people talk about their problems, I feel like I don't care.
- ____ 3. I don't feel emotionally connected to people in pain.
- ____ 4. I pay careful attention when other people talk to me.
- ____ 5. I feel detached from others when they tell me their tales of woe.
- ____ 6. If I see someone going through a difficult time, I try to be caring toward that person.
- ____ 7. I often tune out when people tell me about their troubles.
- ____ 8. I like to be there for others in times of difficulty.
- ____ 9. I notice when people are upset, even if they don't say anything.
- ____ 10. When I see someone feeling down, I feel like I can't relate to them.
- ____ 11. Everyone feels down sometimes, it is part of being human.
- ____ 12. Sometimes I am cold to others when they are down and out.
- ____ 13. I tend to listen patiently when people tell me their problems.
- ____ 14. I don't concern myself with other people's problems.
- ____ 15. It's important to recognize that all people have weaknesses and no one's perfect.

- _____ 16. My heart goes out to people who are unhappy.
- _____ 17. Despite my differences with others, I know that everyone feels pain just like me.
- _____ 18. When others are feeling troubled, I usually let someone else attend to them.
- _____ 19. I don't think much about the concerns of others.
- _____ 20. Suffering is just a part of the common human experience.
- _____ 21. When people tell me about their problems, I try to keep a balanced perspective on the situation.
- _____ 22. I can't really connect with other people when they're suffering.
- _____ 23. I try to avoid people who are experiencing a lot of pain.
- _____ 24. When others feel sadness, I try to comfort them.

Coding Key:

Kindness Items: 6, 8, 16, & 24

Indifference Items: 2, 12, 14, & 18 (Reversed Scored)

Common Humanity: 11, 15, 17, & 20

Separation: 3, 5, 10, & 22 (Reversed Scored)

Mindfulness: 4, 9, 13, & 21

Disengagement: 1, 7, 19, & 23 (Reverse Scored)

To compute a total Compassion Score, take the mean of each subscale and compute a total mean.

Appendix C: Questionnaire # 2 IRI

INTERPERSONAL REACTIVITY INDEX

The following statements inquire about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, indicate how well it describes you by choosing the appropriate letter on the scale at the top of the page: 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5. When you have decided on your answer, fill in the letter next to the item number. **READ EACH ITEM CAREFULLY BEFORE RESPONDING.** Answer as honestly as you can. Thank you.

ANSWER SCALE:

A	B	C	D	F
Does not Describe me very well				Describe Me Very Well

1. I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me.

(FS)

2. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me. (EC)

3. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view. (PT) (-)

4. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems.

(EC) (-)

5. I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel. (FS)

6. In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease. (PD)

7. I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don't often get completely caught up in it. (FS) (-)

8. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision. (PT)

9. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective toward them.

(EC)

10. I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation. (PD)

11. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective. (PT) Self Report Measures for Love and Compassion Research:
Empathy
12. Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me. (FS)
(-)
13. When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm. (PD) (-)
14. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal. (EC) (-)
15. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments. (PT) (-)
16. After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters. (FS)
17. Being in a tense emotional situation scares me. (PD)
18. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them. (EC) (-)
19. I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies. (PD) (-)
20. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen. (EC)
21. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both. (PT)
22. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person. (EC)
23. When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character. (FS)
24. I tend to lose control during emergencies. (PD)
25. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while.
(PT)

26. When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me. (FS)

27. When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces. (PD) 28.

Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.

(PT)

NOTE: (-) denotes item to be scored in reverse fashion

PT = Perspective-Taking Scale

FS = Fantasy Scale

EC = Empathic Concern Scale

PD = Personal Distress Scale

Representation

A = 0

B = 1

C = 2

D = 3

E = 4

Except for reversed-scored items, which are scored:

A = 4

B = 3

C = 2

D = 1

E = 0