

2022

## Cultural Responsiveness in Policing

Stacy Berry Workman  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Stacy Berry Workman

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Review Committee

Dr. Melanye Smith, Committee Chairperson,  
Criminal Justice Faculty

Dr. Darius Cooper, Committee Member,  
Criminal Justice Faculty

Dr. Tony Gaskew, University Reviewer,  
Criminal Justice Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost  
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2022

Abstract

Cultural Responsiveness in Policing

by

Stacy Berry Workman

MJA, Methodist University, 2015

BAAS, Lees McRae College, 2013

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

January 2022

## Abstract

Over the last decade, headlines have highlighted police-citizen conflicts. With the continuing change in communities to an increasingly diverse population, communication and interactions between officers and citizens must progress towards fairness and transparency. The delivery of culturally competent public safety services facilitates more favorable client outcomes, more effective interpersonal communication, and increased service satisfaction from clients. Although this is heavily stressed in public safety agencies and can decrease the possibility of tort liability for failing to provide adequate services or appropriate treatment, the emphasis varies. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the policies and influences of law enforcement leaders who promote culturally competent organizations to provide insight into what is essential for all policing agencies to develop a strategic plan in becoming culturally responsive. Rice and Mathews' cultural competency for public agency's theoretical framework explained the eight key areas for an organization. Interview questions explored the leaders' cultural competency skills and culturally responsive practices in diverse communities. An analysis of interviews with 10 law enforcement leaders was conducted using thematic analysis. The results of the data analysis disclosed three broad themes: visionary professional practice, organizational commitment, and community engagement. Results revealed leaders who implement and influence officers to use culturally competent awareness, knowledge, and skills to understand all cultural, ethnic, racial, and gender groups, strive to be respectful of others and fair in procedures, and build more positive relationships with community members leading to positive social change.

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to the law enforcement leaders who took the time to share their thoughts and knowledge with me. Your job is not getting easier, but I have faith that leaders like you are prepared to face the challenges ahead.

“The role of a leader is not to come up with all the great ideas. The role of a leader is to create an environment in which great ideas can happen.”

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my wonderful husband, Chris, and my amazing daughters, Lexy and Abbey. Without their love and patience through this process of long nights and weekends, none of this would have been possible. I hope this work demonstrates to our children that there is nothing they cannot accomplish and inspires them to chase their dreams and make the world better than the one in which they were born. I'd like to also thank my committee, Dr. Melanye Smith, Dr. Darius Cooper, and Dr. Tony Gaskew for hanging in there with me. Most importantly, I give thanks to God, without Him nothing is possible.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

As American policing faces a crisis of legitimacy and a growing call for fundamental change, police leaders begin to reexamine policies, practices, and culture within their agencies. Policing was established over 1,000 years ago but did not have important limitations on powers until the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution, known as the Bill of Rights, was adopted in 1791. By the 20th century, police reform shifted towards professionalization and community-policing, which exposed the realism that all police-citizen interactions are not equal (Justice, 2021). In present day, the American people move towards repairing the police-community relationship by reinforcing that the police should be seen as a legitimate authority and ensure that the police-citizen interactions be regarded by the citizens as procedurally fair.

Research in the United States has shown that 93% of police work involves one-on-one communication and the ability to communicate with all citizens to be successful (Hennessy et al., 2001). Awareness of the context of communication and the role that it plays in human interaction, as well as value systems of different cultures will enable police to be more effective and efficient when interacting with the public (Hennessy et al., 2001). Communication is not just the simple act of interaction, but to benefit from the current policing crisis, the quality of the interaction is what truly matters (Jonathan-Zamir et al, 2015; Lawrence et al., 2017; Mastrofski et al., 2016; Tyler et al., 2015). The importance of communication and building solid relationships is recognized by police officers working with the diverse communities they serve, but they are guided based on

departmental policy and procedures generated by the current leadership and the availability of training offered.

Police in the United States have created an image of themselves as warriors prepared to use force against a dangerous population rather than guardians of their communities (Li et al., 2021). The citizens' perception is that the police are guilty of bias when interacting with racial minorities. This perception is abridging the rights of many citizens who no longer trust or believe they are being treated impartially by those who took an oath to protect and serve them. Despite the numerous attempts over the last decade to remove bias from policing, discriminatory police practices continue to plague current policing organizations. Moon et al. (2018) explained there are currently no centralized training or assessment on diversity, cultural competency, or implicit bias for police officers. Additionally, there is little to no research indicating how and if police agencies measure or account for this area of training (Moon et al., 2018).

Over the last several decades, public organizations have shifted from pursuing diversity as a simple effort to comply with legal opportunity requirements to a point of acknowledging the important ways in which being diverse and understanding diversity can improve organizational process and outcomes (Selden & Selden, 2001). Diversity concerns are only a portion of police crisis. Police and the community must come together to rebuild the trust between those who signed an oath to serve and those being served. Building trust between police and citizens could be accomplished by ensuring that the officers who interact with the community in potentially lethal ways have leaders who are adequately prepared to create that trust.

Crime rates have fallen, but instead of celebrating success in crime prevention, police face uncertain and perplexing times. Police organizations throughout the United States continue to encounter challenges related to the excessive use of force, racism, and discretion, especially in regard to persons of color (i.e., Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice). Understanding the past and moving forward towards a future with a more collaborative relationship between the police and the community they serve must be accomplished through mutual trust. Leadership within these agencies is beginning to focus on building trust and producing policies and procedures that demonstrate a more diverse and transparent message for everyone.

As part of the strategy to educate police officers on how to understand and effectively respond in encounters with individuals with disabilities, workers with nonconventional identities, women, and minorities in the United States (Nishishiba, 2017), different types of trainings have emerged. These training disciplines include diversity, cultural competency, implicit bias, and fair and impartial policing. Trainings are intended to increase emphasis on embracing inclusion with recognition of different cultures. These types of training have a common purpose of promoting public safety, creating freedom from stereotypes, teaching and learning respect, and helping officers strengthen the bonds between themselves and the citizens of the community in which they serve.

Historically, when it is time to take a serious look into the cultural diversity training for police officers, it only happens when something transpires disrupts the social order. Such events included the Rodney King incident and subsequent riots in 1991

(Whitfield, 2021), the Ferguson shooting in 2014 (Schlosser et al., 2015), to the most recent death of George Floyd in 2020 (George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, 2021). Engel et al. (2019) justified the dearth of evidence related to police reform by understanding the pressure that police agencies feel to act swiftly when an instance of police violence captures national attention. Police agencies tend to introduce interventions without understanding their effects, positive or negative (Gupta, 2020), even though procedural justice (PJ) can enhance attitudes towards police (Maguire et al., 2017). However, history also has shown that while some training programs have been developed, they realistically have achieved only minimal success.

If America continues to follow the same pattern of only developing training once a problem arises, the same results will continue to manifest. This will continue to exacerbate levels of and mistrust within the community and concerns at a national level (Barlow & Barlow, 1993). Research into breaking this cycle can impact the future of policing and how the public views the policing profession (Martinez, 2018). Engel et al. (2020) explained acknowledging the dangers to both citizens and officers during this police-community relations crisis have intensified makes it vital to identify solutions to reduce the frequency and severity of violent encounters. Engel et al. discussed “what works” to reduce the frequency and severity of potentially violent police-citizen encounters, including implicit bias training for officers. Best practices in policing have been explored by expert panels, such as the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015), that explain ways to ensure fair and impartial policing by “understanding the negative impact of explicit and implicit bias on police-community relations and then

taking constructive actions to train officers and the community on how to recognize and mitigate are key factors” (p. 2).

Unfortunately, with the lack of research on cultural competence and implicit bias among police officers, the social science fields have no data to respond to the social debate around police brutality and racial profiling. In other words, some claim that police officers are not racist, while others defend victims by claiming that many police officers are, in fact, often racist. However, there is no data that can inform broader and less polarized considerations about the extent to which police officers have the cultural competence to effectively manage interpersonal encounters with diverse groups of citizens across various social contexts.

The term *cultural competence* implies that a person can meet the needs of culturally diverse individuals. The President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) noted to value and respect diversity in the community and on the force, and “ensure that officers have the knowledge and skills to be culturally responsive and to treat each person with dignity and respect” (p. 16). Instead of using the term cultural competence, this research focused on the phrase *culturally responsive*, which promotes an understanding of culture, ethnicity, and language. Cultural competence implies that it is a skill that someone has or does not have, whereas culturally responsive assumes a person has the openness to adapt to the cultural needs of those around them. Police agencies focus on providing cultural competence training, but research shows that for training to work, there must be a connection between police and the specific community.



The need to bridge the gap between police and diverse communities means that police must take more meaningful steps towards achieving unity. This means going beyond merely providing diversity training in a classroom at the beginning of an officer's career to an occasional in-service training requirement (Alhejji et al., 2016; Goodman, 2019; Huey, 2018). Diversity training works best when it exists in a complete framework that supports it. In this research I aimed to address leaderships' support of culturally responsive practices for police officers, consider how becoming a culturally responsive organization can aid in furthering research and training for officers around diversity and difference, and discuss cultural and contextual awareness, knowledge, and skills that can potentially lead to saving the lives and facilitating the well-being of both police officers and citizens.

### **Background**

Public trust is a product of nurturing goodwill, dispelling false perceptions, and creating a positive attitude about law enforcement. The Gallup poll taken July 2020, noted that 48% of Americans have a great deal or quite a lot of "confidence in the police" (Brenan, 2020). This is down from 53% in the previous year and an all-time high of 64% in 2004. The numbers represent a 27-year low in survey findings. In 2020, another Gallup panel of 48 adults revealed that 56% of White adults were very confident that police officers would treat them fairly, with courtesy and respect. Only 19% of African-American adults, 24% of Asian-American adults, and 40% of Hispanic-American adults said they were very confident. These surveys show that law enforcement needs to put more effort into improving community satisfaction with the public service they provide.

The public's perception of criminal justice professionals can be influenced by police legitimacy. Legitimacy policing describes a broad set of strategies that are focused on improving the respect-worthiness of the police. Legitimacy can be achieved when the services performed by the police to the community are believed to be effective and when the officers and agency operate at the highest standard of professional conduct. Police behavior and the interactions between officers and community members are influenced by the officer in crafting the perception. To repair the police-community relationship, it requires the police to be seen as legitimate authority, and for police officers to achieve this goal; it is necessary that police-citizen interactions are regarded by the citizens as procedurally fair. Subsequently, by policing in a procedurally just manner, police will be more likely to be viewed as a legitimate authority and thus repair their relationship with the communities they serve.

Bittner (2001) argued that police are defined by their ability and duty to use force. The public expectation of police is to know when use of force is necessary. It is surprising that citizens still know relatively little about how, when, and under what circumstances police officers use force (Engel et al., 2020; Garner et al., 2018). Regarding an officer's use of force, a United States Supreme Court case (Justia Law, n.d.a.) provided information about the court's determination that police have the legal authority to use coercive tactics with the primary legal condition that force must be administered in an "objectively reasonable" manner. For an officer to demonstrate an objectively reasonable action of deadly force, there must be a perception that the life of the officer or another person is in imminent danger (Justia Law, n.d.b.). However, what

constitutes that the objectively reasonable force is inherent in the situation requires interpretation (Terrill, 2016). A situation can be perceived differently and therefore interpreted differently by various people. The United States has a diverse population that perceives policing in different ways. Policing is a historically discriminatory practice (Goff & Kahn, 2012) presented along racial or ethnic lines (Harris, 2006). Reports of biased policing and the decision a police officer makes to use deadly force have been persistent in the United States for many years. With the recent rate of confidence in the police at an all-time low for the first time in almost 3 decades signaling a current police-community relations crisis, a danger exists for both citizens and police officers.

American police agencies have damaged the most valuable resource they possess, their own legitimacy. The origin of police legitimacy can be traced back to the work of the 19th century British Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel who created nine principles of policing (Noppe et al., 2017), which are explained in Chapter 2. The development of policing in the United States initially followed Sir Peel's development of policing in England. In the 1970s, American policing framed its policies and procedures through a perspective on what motivated people to obey the law and the directives of legal authorities (Tyler et al., 2015), which draws upon an instrumental model of policing. The instrumental model of policing posits that community members ascribe success to the police if police officers' actions make the community member feel safe (Grant & Pryce, 2020). Although many researchers argue instrumental factors are strong predictors of cooperation with police (Pryce et al., 2017; Tankebe, 2009), the majority have shown

normative factors play a greater role in eliciting citizen cooperation with law enforcement (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler et al., 2010).

The PJ model promotes a promising strategy for building popular legitimacy (Wood et al., 2020). As Tyler et al. (2015) argued, PJ policing is synonymous with the police being neutral, being respectful toward citizens, giving citizens a voice in their encounters with police, and being fair in their decision-making involving citizens. Legitimacy and PJ are both measurements of the extent to which members of the public trust and confide in the police, believe that the police are honest and competent, think that the police treat people fairly and with respect, and are willing to defer to the law and to police authority (Fischer, 2014).

Looking back at the history of police reform and how the profession of law enforcement has changed, it is evident that the modern police forces emerged as a response to “disorder.” Historically, the concern for recognizing the importance of culture and the role that police play because of the power they held created a special need for understanding a pluralistic, multicultural society. Negative mindsets by the community regarding race and culture were noted by researchers in the early 1900s and also especially during the civil rights movement in the mid-1960s and early 1970s (Jordan, 1972; Simon, 1929; Southern & Myrdal, 1987; Walker, 1980). During this decade, there was a need to “sensitize” the police to minority concerns (Hennessy et al., 2001).

By the 1980s, police departments began to consider a new strategy as part of building the police-community relationship. This strategy is known as community policing. Echoing Sir Peel, the Department of Justice explained,

Community policing is democracy in action. It requires the active participation of local government, municipal and business leaders, public and private agencies, residents, churches, schools, and hospitals. All who share a concern for the welfare of the neighborhood should bear responsibility for safeguarding that welfare. (Community Policing Consortium, 1994)

This new concept would begin a new desire for change from sensitizing the police to minority concerns to indicating the need for training that aimed to increase fairness in officer decision-making and enhancing the outcomes of police-citizen encounters specific to the police profession.

Incidents such as the police beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles, 1991, the fatal shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, 2014, to the most recent death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, in 2020, have continued to severely damage the relationship between officers and the communities they serve. As a result of the disconnect between police and the people they serve, the need for fundamental change was highlighted in an executive order by former President Barack Obama on December 18, 2014, to establish the Task Force on 21st Century Policing. The mission of the task force was to emphasize a focus from what is effective crime control towards a concern for how the actions of police officers influence public trust and confidence in policing (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015).

The task force recommended that the federal government take a leadership role in training reform with the goal of standardizing and improving training in the areas of implicit bias, social interactions, cultural responsiveness, and policing in a democratic society. Furthermore, changes in the development and delivery of these trainings, as well as incentivized higher education attainment for police officers, were recommended for aiding in a more procedurally just and fair police force (Musgrave, 2019). These recommendations for change included promoting a model of policing that can be perceived as listening to, empathizing with, and responding to people in the community; explaining police policies and practices in interactions with civilians; and treating the public with dignity, courtesy, and respect needed further research.

As explained by Mitchell and James (2018) and by Green and Hagiwara (2020), the problem is that no empirical evidence exists that implicit bias training works. In fact, consistent evidence shows that bias training done the wrong way, like lukewarm diversity training, can have the opposite impact of inducing anger and frustration (Coon, 2016; Israel et al., 2017). The lack of impartial, objective evidence on the impact of implicit bias training leaves not only officers and their administrators without direction, but it also leaves the public uninformed. Conducting interviews with leaders who have been encouraging implicit bias or cultural competency policies and training could provide insight into pathways for improvement.

As the phrases culturally responsive, culturally fair, and culturally impartial have become of interest in policing, investigating research from other professions on the topic could help guide further research. For example, studies on teacher training have focused

on developing a culturally responsive understanding and culturally responsive pedagogy. Culturally responsive understanding is not a new perspective for higher education. Although efforts to attain inclusive excellence in the classroom created a vast amount of information summarizing key strategies for inclusion (Alao et al., 2017; Bleich et al., 2015; Cunningham, 2019; DiBartolo et al., 2016; Gravley-Stack et al., 2016), the establishment of academia differs from the short-term learning environment essential to police training.

Sereni-Massinger and Bawden (2015) described that less than 1% of police agencies and sheriff's offices require a 4-year degree. While officers are not required to complete higher education, this indicates a lack of exposure to cross-cultural leadership and critical thinking skills that might have typically been developed in a higher education environment. Leaders in policing must also take the step to be prepared to lead a diverse organization. One way to help prepare them should start in university educational leadership programs and professional development explaining the principles to be culturally responsive leaders (Gaymon, 2017). Smith (2020) argued that "higher education must play a critical role if we are to achieve the promise of democracy: developing a pluralist society that works" (p. vii).

When police organizations are not prepared to serve citizens in a culturally responsive way and citizens are challenged in seeking assistance, communication is exacerbated. Cultural responsiveness is a critical factor and essential framework for providing relevant and effective services across multiple systems dealing with individuals in a community, but most of these social systems are not inherently culturally responsive.

However, evidence shows that when these systems are culturally adapted, they work better and produce better outcomes for diverse populations (Bernal & Domenech Rodriguez, 2012). Beyond culturally adapted programs and interventions, a culturally competent staff who administers programs from within a culturally responsive organizational climate are best positioned to serve the diverse needs of underrepresented groups (Bernal & Domenech Rodriguez, 2012). Bernal and Domenech Rodriguez's (2012) work also reinforced the idea that cultural competence is a multilevel phenomenon that must exist beyond the microlevel of service provider-community interaction that leaders can inspire in their agencies.

In the last decade, police leaders began to recognize the policing-community crisis and the much-needed improvement of community trust. Leaders began to explore the concepts of legitimacy and PJ in their organizations (Fischer, 2014). Efforts have intensified for these police leaders to identify solutions to reduce the frequency and severity of violent encounters despite the absence of evidence on best practices. Coderoni (2002) posed the following question: "What happens when the organizational culture of a police department, combined with the personal biases and prejudices of police officers, conflicts and clashes with the culture of the community?" (p. 16). Considering the tension and distrust in America's current cultural climate fraught, the question is more relevant than ever.

In the United States, policing occurs within an organizational context (Maguire & King, 2004). The organizational culture of police incorporates the common morals, principles, assumptions, and expectations of the members of a group or organization



(French, 2010). French (2010) elaborated how the culture of an organization starts with the leaders and slowly transforms with the members who exercise positive or negative behaviors. A leader is not the only influencer of a police organization's culture. There are organizational subcultures that share values, beliefs, and engage in patterns of behavior that distinguish them from others in society. For police officers such subgroups include Sheriff's Association, Fraternal Order for Police, Police Benevolent Society, and Association of Chiefs of Police.

To extend on organizational culture and the examination of culturally competent public administrators (CCPA), Rice (2010/2015a) explained a culturally competent organization has the capacity to bring into its system different behaviors, attitudes, and policies. Broadening Rice's (2010/2015b) work on public administrators' organizational cultural competency, Lucero et al. (2020) noted organizational cultural responsiveness helps agencies and providers develop and deliver more culturally appropriate services to diverse individuals and can make those individuals feel more comfortable with the service provider. By contrast, individuals may feel misunderstood or even discriminated against when services are not culturally responsive, and this can discourage individuals and even entire communities from seeking needed services. Thus, cultural responsiveness is of particular concern when police officers interact with individuals while maintaining public order and safety, enforcing the law, or preventing, detecting, and investigating criminal activities.

This study was directed towards individuals in policing public administration, sheriffs and chiefs, because they impact the policy behind the accountability of their

organization's sworn personnel related to cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills. By examining current procedures and policies and learning what recent changes are happening in policing organizations, specifically how leaders are responding to the police-community crisis in their agencies, better police-community relationships may be built for the safety of all.

### **Problem Statement**

According to the Pew Center, by 2055, the United States may not have a dominant ethnic or racial majority (Cohn & Caumont, 2016). In 2019, Americans who identify as a race or ethnicity other than non-Hispanic White made up more than 40% of the population, with the prediction of an increase to over 50% by 2044, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (Colby & Ortman, 2015). With this rapidly changing demographic composition, many fields, such as public administration, are conducting an ongoing discourse regarding cultural interactions (Danso, 2015). A public administrator is a government employee who works to provide and improve services offered to members of the public. Public administrators affect citizens' lives and are ideally both action-oriented and results-driven to serve all members of the community, not just selected segments, small groups, or specific individuals. Police leaders are public administrators who are expected to serve citizens in communities through safe interaction with individuals from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Citizens expect to receive fair, unbiased, and reliable policing services without fear of discrimination or excessive force.

Police leaders and their officers must understand cultural influences to provide effective communication without discriminating against citizens. Cultural influence is a

significant concept to acknowledge because the disconnects have produced a high percentage of police-citizen conflicts in the United States (Coderoni, 2002). When police organizations fail to address the lack of trust officers have with diverse groups of people, more negative opinions of police by citizens result. The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) was established to help identify the best means to deliver an effective partnership or solution between police and local communities that decreases crime and increases trust. The final report from the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) recommended that policing organizations provide recruitment training and yearly in-service training on implicit bias and cultural diversity.

Research shows that policing organizations that invest time in diversity education and become familiar with cultural differences are more equipped to resolve conflicts and prevent crime (Sereni-Massinger & Wood, 2016). Many cities and towns have communities with various racial and ethnic backgrounds and cultures, and it is essential that officers effectively communicate and understand the norms of these diverse groups. Research also shows that individuals who are made aware of their implicit biases are motivated to implement unbiased behaviors (Lane et al., 2007). Officers who develop or acquire cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills have a better understanding about the needs of citizens and demonstrate responses that consider the cultural perspective during their interactions with citizens.

According to Skogan et al. (2015) policing organizations that integrate cultural competency awareness training into their officers' instruction programs are currently underresearched. Numerous policing organizations include cultural competency training

as an option, but the duration and type of instruction differ among organizations (Miles-Johnson & Pickering, 2018). Miles-Johnson and Pickering (2018) suggested that not only should these organizations hold culturally competent training, but they must also focus on acceptable performance in the field after training. Getha-Taylor et al. (2020) used evidence-based interventions for cultural competency development in public institutions and concluded that cultural competency development is critical to ensuring responsive public service.

Efforts to address cultural responsiveness in policing have solely been focused on technical solutions such as in-service training and instructional approaches in ways that do not consider the adaptive challenges of shifting the mindsets of officers. However, leadership within police agencies can implement and enforce policies that promote culturally competent behaviors and attitudes.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2016) released a report that clarified the need for further research to investigate how to institutionalize practices in law enforcement agencies to withstand future changes in leadership and personnel. Police agencies often reported that leadership tasked with addressing diversity was critical to the success of their efforts in policing. Without documenting and investigating what today's current leaders are using to become culturally responsive in serving diverse communities successfully, the most promising practices may be a mere personnel change away from disappearing (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2016).

Further research and focus could reveal how to institutionalize culturally responsive practices so that they can withstand changes in high-ranking leadership over

time. Hence, this study filled the gap in research by focusing on identifying how leaders in policing increase the responsiveness of diversity or cultural competency training in their agency. By providing understanding of the assumptions, internal structure, and application of cultural competency in response to diversity from a police leader perspective, this study adds to the existing body of research related to diversity and cultural responsiveness in policing. Enhancing policy and organizational culture for diversity awareness, knowledge, and training in police organizations to effectively serve diverse communities can help build positive relationships between police and citizens.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenology study was to explore cultural competency policies and practices from a leader's perspective to improve relationships between police and citizens in the diverse communities in which they serve. I conducted interviews with police leaders to understand how they impact current policies, encourage continued training and support, and influence subordinates to provide a culturally responsive agency.

Qualitative research methods allow flexibility in obtaining data from case to case in the same study. Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that describes the meaning of the lived experience of a phenomenon for individuals, which in this study was the experience of police leaders in North Carolina. The purpose of this research was to consider how leaders in law enforcement may give attention to the phenomenon (diversity and cultural responsiveness) in the world around them (the community and organization). By applying a qualitative research method and a phenomenological

approach, I focused on the individuals' perceptions of their personal experiences to gain insights into how leaders influence their agency to become culturally responsive to the diverse communities they serve.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided this research study.

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of police leaders who have implemented culturally responsive practices?

RQ2: How do police leaders influence cultural responsiveness in their agency?

### **Conceptual or Theoretical Framework**

Organizations that use the lens of cultural competency improve the quality and delivery of programs and services to an increasingly diverse population (Norman-Major & Gooden, 2014). The significance of applying a cultural competency framework to this study was that it provided a basis for the discussion on leadership practices of police organizations in the public sector. Police agencies are moving towards acquiring and applying the knowledge of cultural competency needed to be effective in communication when interacting with individuals in the diverse communities they serve. I sought to understand if and to what extent police leaders promote a work environment that supports cultural responsiveness and constitutes a framework for public administrators.

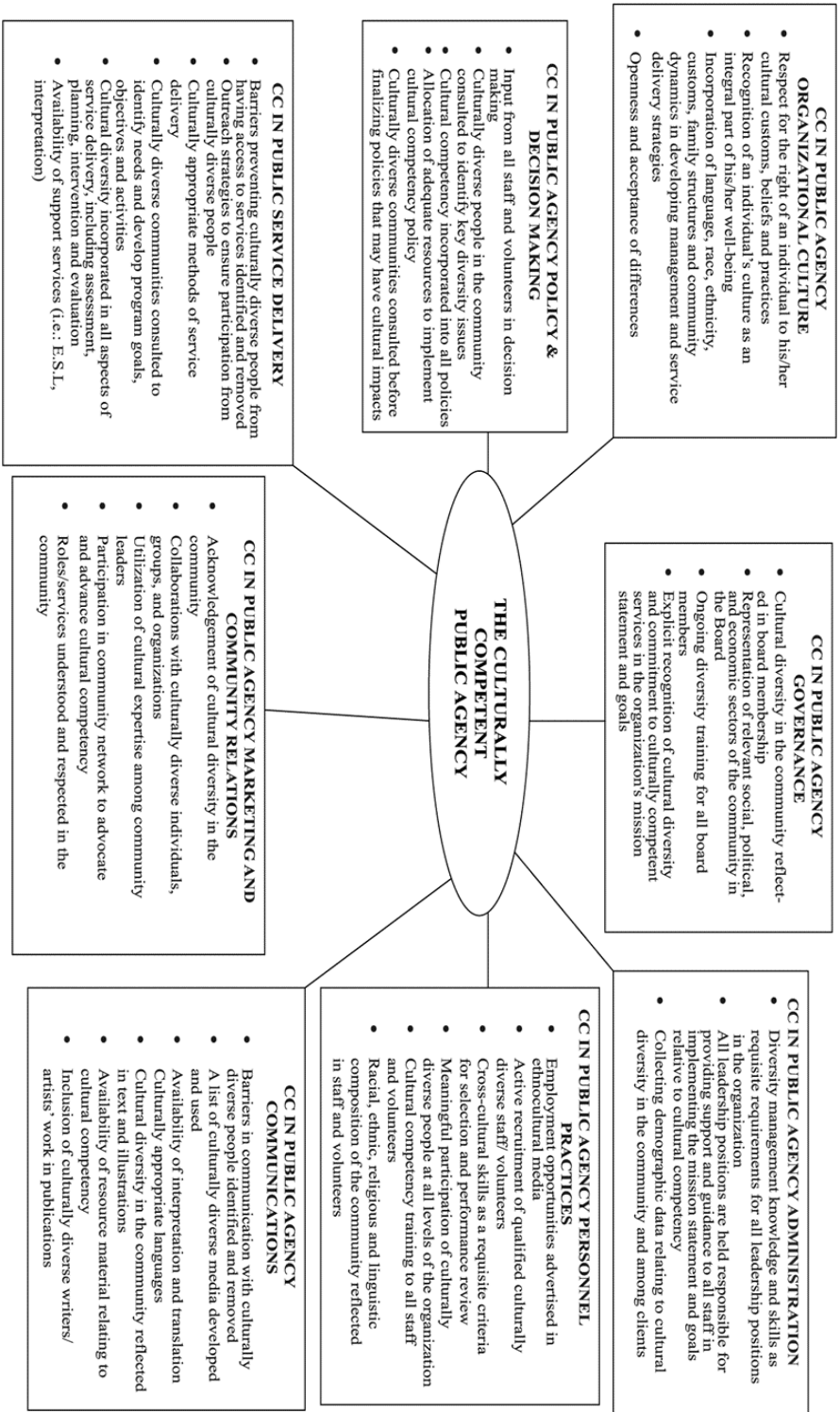
CCPA, an organizational theory, is a framework for understanding cultural competency in public service delivery. The CCPA framework is used to understand:

- How open is the organization to demographic and cultural diversity changes?

- Does the organization have human resources or management training programs that include equitable delivery of programs and services to diverse communities?
- Do the tools used produce effective and acceptable community outcomes and public policy?
- Are the perceptions about the organization's receptiveness to changes and outcomes a result of acquiring a diverse workforce? (Rice, 2010/2015b)

The CCPA examined by Rice (2010/2015b) addressed the central idea that cultural proficiency arrives when the organization, its professionals, and involved staff understand and effectively respond to the challenges and opportunities surrounding sociocultural diversity in a social system. Emphasized by Rice (2010/2015b), there are eight key areas recognized in a CCPA. The key areas include: (a) administration, (b) mission and governance, (c) organizational culture, (d) effective communications, (e) personnel practices and staffing patterns, (f) service delivery, (g) policy and decision-making, and (h) outreach and marketing approaches (p.199), as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**  
*Culturally Competent Public Agency*  
 Rice, (2010,2015b)



Source: Derived from Cultural Diversity Institute (2000)



Reexamined later in 2014, CCPA by Rice and Matthews found the need for a cultural competency model and being culturally proficient to transform cultural awareness and cultural knowledge about diverse groups into specific cultural skills, practices, standards, and policies. Being culturally proficient increases the quality and effectiveness of public agency services and programs. I will use this model to explore leaders using cultural skills, best practices, quality standards, and current policies to be culturally proficient.

In 1994, the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act Amendments defined cultural competence (Goode & Sockalingam, 2000). However, over the years, organizations have emerged with a variety of definitions. For this study's purpose, I will use Cross et al.'s (1989) appropriate definition because it explains a culturally competent organization. Cross et al. defined *cultural competence* as "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (p.7). Cultural responsiveness requires individuals to be culturally competent and is explained further in Chapter 2. Cultural competency is having an awareness of one's own cultural identity and views about differences and learning and building on the different cultural and community norms of individuals and their families.

According to Bush (2000), culturally competent public administration is a "respect for, and understanding of, diverse ethnic and cultural groups, their histories, traditions, beliefs, and value systems" (p.1) in providing and delivering services. In

education, Khalifa et al. (2016) observed that culturally responsive leaders need to continuously support minoritized individuals by examining their assumptions about race and culture.

Cross et al. (1989) noted that culturally competent organizations have essential elements. These essential elements are:

- Value diversity.
- Capacity for cultural self-assessment (diversity audit).
- Conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact.
- Institutionalize cultural knowledge throughout their activities.
- Adapt service delivery to reflect an understanding of cultural diversity.

The approach for this study explained further in Chapter 3 is a phenomenological interview. Patton (2015) explained that a phenomenological interview focuses on capturing the lived experiences of the phenomenon. Exploring the experiences of the policing organizations by interviewing the leaders who make the decisions and affect policy to ensure their agency is becoming culturally responsive will result in information-rich case generation.

### **Nature of the Study**

The proposed research of this study was a qualitative research method to explore and understand how policing leaders influence their subordinates within their agency towards developing their cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills, thus making them culturally responsive. Through in-depth interviewing and observation, a phenomenology approach will enable me to understand the experience leaders have in responding to increasingly diverse communities. I will use purposeful sampling to seek rich information

from participants who are likely to contribute to a deeper understanding of cultural responsiveness policy and how they impact subordinates in their organizations.

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2018), phenomenological research involves studying a small number of participants to develop patterns and relationships of meaning.

I chose a phenomenology study, which will assist me in understanding what a police leader's world looks like. Understanding a law enforcement leaders' point of view and how they make sense of the world around them will provide meaningful results of their lived experiences while they initiate adjusting towards a more culturally responsive approach to policing in our rapidly changing demographic compositions.

### **Definitions of Terms**

The following terms and definitions will be used for this study:

*Community*: A collective of individuals who share commonalities that draw them together, which include race or ethnicity, religion, family, occupation, and socioeconomic status (Altschuler, 1970).

*Cultural awareness*: Awareness of personal biases, an ability to accept cultural differences, and openness to a variety of worldviews or perspectives (Rice & Mathews, 2014).

*Cultural competence*: Cross et al. (1989) noted 'competence' implies having the capacity to function effectively as an individual and an organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by consumers and their communities.

*Cultural knowledge:* Having a knowledge of diverse cultures and groups as it pertains to their history, differing worldviews, or divergent perspectives (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013).

*Cultural responsiveness:* The National Center for Culturally Responsive Education Systems (NCCREST) stated, “Cultural responsiveness is the ability to learn from and relate respectfully with people of your own culture as well as those from other cultures” (2017, p. 6).

*Cultural skills:* The ability to use cultural awareness and knowledge to recognize and freely discuss cultural issues and differences (Kirmayer, 2012, p. 62).

*Culture:* DeMarco (2019) used the definition, “the sum of the history, folklore, and values that, taken together, make up the unique identity of a society at a given place and point in time” (p. 7).

*Diversity:* Merriam-Webster’s (n.d.) definition of diversity is primarily the inclusion of different types of people (such as people of different races or cultures) in a group or organization.

*Implicit bias:* James (2018) explained implicit bias as a subtle and largely unconscious or semiconscious attitude that influences behavior.

*Police leader or executive:* A police leader or executive directs a law enforcement agency or organization and is currently a police chief or sheriff. The leader can authorize a chief deputy or captain to participate for purposes of this study.

### **Assumptions**

A study involving members of a government agency requires many assumptions. One assumption is the participants will answer the interview questions honestly and candidly. Those in law enforcement have been expected to serve with high standards and are regarded as being honest and having integrity. The importance of understanding this phenomenon includes the need for participants to be candid when responding to interview questions.

Another assumption from my perspective is that the inclusion criteria of the leaders in police organizations are appropriate and, therefore, ensure that the participants have all experienced similar phenomena of this study. A third assumption is that recognizing those who create the policy surrounding cultural responsiveness have a specific agenda for their own organizations.

### **Scope and Delimitation**

I did not aim to measure the effectiveness of diversity training or implicit bias training of police officers nor to represent the experiences of police officers. Only the experiences of the participants, who are leaders at police agencies, will be represented in this study. This scope of this study will be narrow because this phenomenon influences a significant number of police agencies. However, the study will not include all members of a law enforcement or police agency or organization and is limited to law enforcement agencies in a specific state.

### **Limitations**

Limitations in a research study are factors the researcher cannot control (Nenty, 2009). There are a number of limitations associated with this study. The limitations of this study may include leaders in policing not wanting to participate in this study due to the nature of the phenomenon and fear associated with retaliation. This limitation will be accounted for by the inclusion of numerical coding for identifying variables. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym to protect their anonymity. Using pseudonyms protects the participants' anonymity when using direct quotes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010) which may be used in this study.

Other limitations when using a phenomenology approach will be my ability to bracket their personal past knowledge and all other theoretical knowledge (Patton, 2015) to give full attention to the phenomenon. This limitation could bring up biases influencing the study outcome, especially with my police background. A reasonable measure to address personal bias will be to view the data through the lens of a culturally competent public administrator. Another limitation is that not all police agencies have the same perceptions, but this could be addressed by only generalizing the results from one state, North Carolina.

### **Significance**

With the continuing change in communities from an increasingly diverse population, communication and interactions between officers and citizens must progress towards an air of transparency. The delivery of culturally responsive public safety services facilitates a more favorable citizen outcome, more effective interpersonal

communication, and increased service satisfaction from the community. Although cultural competency is stressed in public safety agencies and can decrease the possibility of tort liability for failing to provide adequate services or appropriate treatment, the emphasis on training varies.

This study will help fill the research gap in understanding how cultural responsiveness is perceived by police leaders and their influence on decision-making processes for policy and practices. I am seeking to address the identified need of a more culturally responsive policing agency. This phenomenological research is unique because the results may be used to help leadership identify how they influence culturally responsive philosophy and shift the mindset of officers within their organizations. More specifically, the results of this study may support a more informed police leader on decision-making procedures for a culturally responsive organization and increased accountability among their officers.

Research suggests that unless promoted by the leader, cultural responsiveness can run the risk of fading in an organization (Khalifa et al., 2016). The results of this study will provide essential insights into understanding how police leaders impact their subordinates to attend cultural or diversity training while continuing to develop cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills in becoming a culturally responsive organization to recognize better communication when working with a diverse population. Cultural responsiveness training for police helps them develop sensitivity to social, geographic, economic, language diversity, and related challenges faced by those excluded from mainstream society. If leaders encourage officers to work with and understand all

cultural, ethnic, racial, and gender groups, they can become more competent and build more positive relationships with community members. In return, this helps the community appreciate and better understand officers' actions when interacting with citizens. Reducing confusion and improving community affairs reduces potential conflicts. As a result of this study, police leaders can cultivate a strategic model to move towards a culturally responsive organization.

### **Summary**

In recent years, research has paid more attention to the differences in the abilities of individuals to deal effectively with people from other cultural backgrounds, especially due to global connectiveness (Bernardo & Presbitero, 2017; Li et al., 2016). In various disciplines, such as a number of constructs have been developed in an attempt to better understand cultural competency for police officers, yet each contain different components hence there is no commonly accepted conceptualization of it (Leung et al., 2014; Leung et al., 2013). This 'fuzziness' has not led to a significantly better understanding of the cultural responsive concept (Bartel-Radic & Giannelloni, 2017), and therefore there is a need for our understanding to be improved.

Chapter 1 contains discussion of the background of the problem, particular the phenomenon of culturally responsive public service in policing. In this chapter, I discuss the exploration of police leaders' understanding and perceptions of cultural responsiveness within their agencies. Also, the chapter includes the problem statement, the purpose, the research questions, the nature of the study, and the definitions of the terms. Additional discussion includes the assumptions, scope, limitations, and



significance of the study. Furthermore, I included a discussion of the CCPA to guide the research questions.

Chapter 2 begins with a presentation of the literature, the search strategy, and the research databases. This chapter will give an in-depth overview of the role cultural diversity, cultural competency, implicit bias, and police training has played in the history of police reform. Other topics addressed in the literature include PJ, police legitimacy, CCPAs' framework, and cultural responsiveness.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of policing leaders and their perspectives regarding culturally responsive policies and practices in the field of law enforcement and public service. In the literature review I aimed to guide the exploration of policing through PJ, police legitimacy, police-community relationships, cultural diversity, implicit bias, and cultural responsiveness throughout the history of police reform, along with critical areas recognized in the conceptual framework of a culturally competent public administration.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

For this literature review, I used the Walden University library. The following databases were used to search for scholarly, peer-reviewed articles for this research: Academic Search Complete, Criminal Justice Database, Thoreau multi-database, SAGE journals, Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, Bureau of Justice Statistics, EBSCO eBooks. The initial search of the literature was limited to the previous 5-year period (2016-2021) on *procedural justice, police legitimacy, police-community relationships, cultural competency, cultural responsiveness, implicit bias, and culturally competent public agency*. Initially, the phrase *law enforcement* was used in each applicable search, but through further examination, the phrase *law enforcement* was substituted with *police*.

### **Introduction**

Understanding the changing social and cultural demographics of the United States are essential to understanding the constituency police serve. Police officers must grasp the various factors that may significantly affect police-community relations. Some factors

are out of their control but understanding the impact of those factors on the job that police do is critically important. It is not just a case of providing fair and equitable service; doing so is a critical component of officer safety and career survival.

As with any other business or profession, criminal justice professionals must understand the demographics of the citizens they serve. Failure to recognize and react to shifts in population demographics can lead to unintentional disparity or perception of disparity in the delivery of police services. In the United States as a whole, the White share of the population is declining as Hispanic, Asian, and Black populations grow. However, the shift to a more diverse nation is happening more quickly in some places than in others. According to Pew Research Center (2020) analysis of Census Bureau data, there were 151 United States counties with populations over 10,000 residents where minorities made up a majority of the population. That is an increase of 41 counties (27%) between 2000 and 2018. The changing demographic of communities establishes the need for police to have the knowledge of those individuals they serve in their communities.

Initiatives to improve the police-community relationship throughout the United States have been prioritized by exploring efforts in understanding cultural diversity. Efforts to increase cultural awareness and knowledge through training have been explored by other professions, such as culturally responsive teaching in higher education (Karatas, 2020; Mayfield, 2020; Muñiz, 2020; J. Robinson, 2020), culturally competent healthcare professionals (Matthews & Van Wyk, 2018; Osmanecyic et al., 2021; Wilson et al., 2018), and cultural competency in psychology and social work (Barsky, 2018; Geerlings et al., 2018; Jacobs, 2019; Jain & Aggarwal, 2020; National Association of

Social Workers, 2017), but lack in efforts for policing. However, there are factors for policing and those in public service agencies or public administration that are much different from the other professions.

In this chapter, I summarize and synthesize research studies that include essential information regarding the history of PJ and legitimacy, the history of police-community relationships, and the history of cultural diversity, implicit bias, and cultural responsiveness in police reform. Additionally, I address how cultural responsiveness became an essential topic in the current research. Note, however, that much of the critical research on police reform and training dates from the early 1990s, when diversity and cultural competency arose as a critical topic, to 2015 when President Barack Obama established the Task Force on 21st Century Policing and issued recommendations for law enforcement agencies. In certain instances where the older literature is relevant, information from articles was included to provide police reform history and progress throughout the United States.

### **Procedural Justice and Legitimacy**

The United States is currently undergoing a movement to reform policing that has divided the nation across party lines and turned the topic into ammunition for the ongoing culture war. The movement is attempting to reform policing to increase the public perceptions of police PJ (Hagan & Hans, 2017). With the ongoing police reform, it is appropriate to discuss PJ for research on cultural awareness and responsiveness by clarifying PJ theory and legitimacy in policing and why it is essential to the foundation of this study.

PJ is essentially common sense. What matters to human beings when they interact with other human beings is that they are being treated fairly. The fair exercise of authority on the part of law enforcement when they deal with the public is done through the provision of PJ (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). PJ is a complex and multifaceted approach to the way citizens view encounters with police and other legal authorities and the fairness of the procedures used in that interaction (Tyler, 1988). Whenever life, liberty, or property is taken without affording the individual being affected a meaningful opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, the cry of procedural unfairness is heard.

PJ must begin with the basic issue of the nature of procedures. These procedures are set forth by legal regulations or law. When procedures are established, the expectation is public acceptance. For the public to accept the procedure, it must be legitimate. The origin of police legitimacy can be traced back to the authorship of the 19th century British Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel as he created his nine principles of policing (Noppe et al., 2017), which are discussed later in this review.

Decades of research document the prominent role of PJ in shaping the perceptions citizens' have of the police. However, there is limited research on PJ in police organizations, particularly the mediating mechanisms connecting internal PJ and officer behavioral tendencies (Wang et al., 2020). However, emerging in observational (Jonathan-Zamir et al., 2015) and experimental studies (Murphy et al., 2009; Skogan et al., 2015) is the prosocial effects of police PJ. Pickett et al. (2018) found a social schematic model of perceived police PJ. A meta-analysis by Walters and Bolger (2019)

suggested that while PJ perceptions appear to predict compliance with the law, legitimacy beliefs are instrumental in promoting compliance from citizens.

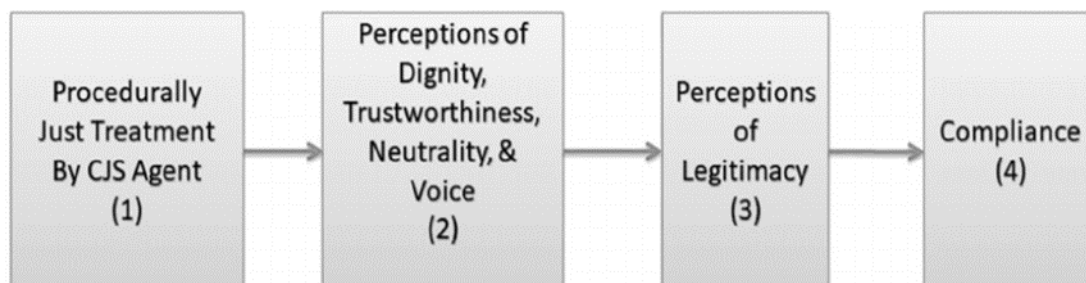
The foundational argument came from Tyler (1990): “If citizens regard legal authorities as more legitimate, they are less likely to break any laws, for they believe that they ought to follow them, regardless of potential for punishment” (p. 4). People put more weight on how authorities exercise power, how those same legal authorities view them, and the group to which they belong (Meares, 2017). This premise is echoed in 2015 with a report from the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing: People are more likely to obey the law when they believe that those who are enforcing it have the legitimate authority to tell them what to do. The public confers legitimacy only on those they believe are acting in procedurally just ways (President’s Task Force, 2015).

Figure 2 is a schematic representation of Tyler’s (1990) theory of PJ as Nagin and Telep (2020) explained it. Figure 2 is a causal chain that begins with agents of the criminal justice system acting in a trustworthy and neutral manner, treating citizens with dignity and respect, and providing citizens the opportunity to explain their actions by having a voice. The next three stages in the sequence pertain to the citizens who have the agent’s or officer’s attention. The PJ theory assumes that if citizens are treated in procedurally just ways, they will recognize their fair treatment (Nagin & Telep, 2020). The perception in turn increases the citizen’s perceptions of the legitimacy of the agent or officer, which in turn increases compliance with the law.

This model of police legitimacy is just one of the models but is highly influential in policing research and practice. The integrated framework of legitimacy combines ideas

from the process-based model with classic trust models from research in psychology (Hamm et al., 2017) to separate assessments of procedural fairness in an interaction from assessments of the trustworthiness of an authority. Procedural fairness should predict trustworthiness, which in turn should predict trust and compliance. Although the focus is on perceptions of the public, the chain also endorses how these viewpoints may impact officer behavior in the field (Nix et al., 2020).

The first step in the chain is procedurally just treatment by police as it will translate into improved citizen perceptions of fair treatment because the theory depends on the perceptions being grounded in the actual treatment. Large evidence of survey-based work is supportive of the relationship between Boxes 2 and 3 of Figure 2 and the correlations with greater compliance with the law as indicated by self-reported behavior (Fagan & Tyler, 2005; Jackson et al., 2012; Telep & Somers, 2019). The link between Boxes 1 and 4 (Figure 2) found that police who were disrespected significantly decreased compliance but that police making an effort to show respect did significantly increase compliance (McCluskey & Reisig, 2017).

**Figure 2***Schematic Representation of the Theory of Procedural Justice*

The casual chain does not include measures such as training, organizational incentives, or monitoring technologies that are effective in improving PJ treatment of citizens by police (Nagin & Telep, 2020). Studies from Skogan et al. (2015) and Schaefer and Hughes (2016) suggest one day trainings on PJ can improve officer attitudes about using the theory. More recently, a multifaceted evaluation of the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice showed impacts of training on officer attitudes in a study which included three days of training for all officers, two on PJ and legitimacy and one on implicit bias (La Vigne et al., 2019). Officer attitudes toward PJ improved post training (Jannetta et al., 2019). Meares (2017) determined PJ as the key to whether the public will conclude that legal authorities behave fairly.

The legitimacy of law and of legal authorities while obtaining public cooperation lies in citizens' evaluations of the procedures through which legal rules are created and implemented. Research in social psychological studies indicates that political trust resulting from procedurally fair treatment can affect the stability of the organization enforcing laws (Röhl & Machura, 2019). When police exercise their authority fairly in a



general manner, they are viewed as legitimate (Elliott et al., 2011). Research on the antecedents to legitimacy have suggested that perceptions of PJ which is the fairness of police behavior and the processes through which police decisions are made are important for fostering legitimacy (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003).

Mazerolle et al. (2013) found that the citizens feel well treated by the police from very short, positive encounters. Research indicates that legitimacy is strengthened because officer's PJ shows that they use power in fair, justified and measured ways, but also because the citizens' encounters with the group have been represented as the police is enhanced by the identity-relevant information that PJ conveys (Bradford et al., 2014). About the year 2010, police leaders began to recognize the much-needed improvement of community trust and began to explore the concepts of legitimacy and PJ (Fischer, 2014). Legitimacy and PJ are measurements of the extent to which members of the public trust and have confidence in the police, believe that the police are honest and competent, think that the police treat people fairly and with respect, and are willing to deter to the law and to police authority (Fischer, 2014).

Nagin and Telep (2017) suggested there are a wealth of data establishing correlations between perceptions of fair process, views about legitimacy, and obedience to the law. However, they also point to the limited research showing strong causal connections between PJ perceptions and compliance with the police. They conclude that the scientific jury is still out on the capacity of procedurally just behavior to generate legal compliance. They argued that more research is required to establish a firm basis for the implementation of PJ theory in criminal justice policies and police training programs.

Nagin and Telep (2020) also explained the perceptions of procedurally just treatment and of legitimacy are a result of a lifetime accumulation of historical cultural, community, and familial influences, not just the interactions with policing agencies. In response to the social issue, diversity or cultural competency training can make a positive impact on addressing prejudice, stereotyping, and other biases (King et al., 2012). Research across the world has shown support of key benefits of PJ that reinforce its value as a tool for police and have shown that training officers in the principles of PJ can impact the views of officers and can play a role in improving police-community relations.

Notably, the recommendations made through research are in conjunction with those of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) focused on "building trust and legitimacy," and its very first recommendation stated:

Law enforcement culture should embrace a guardian mindset to build public trust and legitimacy. Toward that end, police and sheriffs' departments should adopt procedural justice as the guiding principle for internal and external policies and practices to guide their interactions with the citizens they serve (p. 11).

The Task Force's recommendation should serve as roadmap for policing across the country. Concepts of PJ are already visible in many police agency policies, particularly in the form of mission statements communicating the overall goal of the agency, and in policies specifically addressing professional responsibility standards for officers (Quattlebaum et al., 2018). Policies provide an important opportunity to distill

professional responsibility considerations into a set of principles to guide members of the department, and to establish that principles of PJ inform all the departments' actions.

Communities rely on police to “protect and serve” while the police, in turn, rely on the community to support and cooperate, but the police-community relationship is not always a harmonious one. For police to engage the community, they should first make sure their own agency is in order. Gould (2017) suggested relevant questions that leaders in law enforcement agencies should ask themselves. So, how do leaders build relationships within the community and within their agencies? By now most law enforcement/policing agencies leaders understand or have heard of PJ, police legitimacy, and implicit bias.

It is critical that police agencies execute on the concept of PJ by implementing practices, procedures, and policing that support it. This includes all areas of the organization especially the behaviors within the agency. PJ is how the community supports the way they feel about policing agencies. This is the priority when discussing research on culture responsiveness and building trust between police and the community they serve. If citizens do not trust the procedures that police take, then perceived discrimination or bias can occur making the situation exasperated for both the citizen and the officer.

### **Cultural Diversity, Cultural Competency, Implicit Bias**

The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition defined culture as “the shared patterns of behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs, and affective understanding that are learned through a process of socialization” (p. 1). Thus, the

characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music, and what we believe is right or wrong. Rice (2010/2015a) noted that diversity had the potential to become the most important consideration for public service agencies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Currently, 2021, the outcome of events is developing into just that, especially in public service of police officers.

Cultural awareness and cultural responsiveness are unique to the police profession because of the power officers possess. This power creates a special need for the understanding of a multicultural society. The changing communities along with the racial and ethnic challenges becomes critical to community-based policing (Hendricks et al, 2011). Understanding the role of culture and the police role in society is not new. In fact, researchers noted negative attitudes by police officers regarding culture and race in the early 1900's (Simon, 1929). Research shows that policing agencies that invest time in diversity education and become familiar with cultural differences are more apt to resolve conflicts and prevent crime (Sereni-Massinger & Wood, 2016).

Many cities and towns have communities with a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds and cultures, and it is essential that officers effectively communicate and understand the norms of these diverse groups. Research also shows that individuals who are made aware of their implicit biases are motivated to implement unbiased behaviors (Lane et al., 2007). Officers that acquire or possess cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills better understand the needs of citizens and demonstrate responses that consider the cultural perspective of their interactions with citizens.

## **History of Police Reform, Cultural Competency, and Police Training**

The 19th century British Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel, who is regarded as the father of modern-day policing, created the first police department in England in 1829.

Peel introduced his nine principles, theories, and constant police reform as a community-minded style of policing similar to community policing today. Sir Robert Peel's Nine

Principles of Policing are as follows:

- Principle 1: "The basic mission for which the police exist is to prevent crime and disorder."
- Principle 2: "The ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon public approval of police actions."
- Principle 3: "Police must secure the willing cooperation of the public in voluntary observance of the law to be able to secure and maintain the respect of the public."
- Principle 4: "The degree of cooperation of the public that can be secured diminishes proportionately to the necessity of the use of physical force."
- Principle 5: "Police seek and preserve public favor not by catering to the public opinion but by constantly demonstrating absolute impartial service to the law."
- Principle 6: "Police use physical force to the extent necessary to secure observance of the law or to restore order only when the exercise of persuasion, advice and warning is found to be insufficient."

- Principle 7: "Police, at all times, should maintain a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police; the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence."
- Principle 8: "Police should always direct their action strictly towards their functions and never appear to usurp the powers of the judiciary."
- Principle 9: "The test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with it."

These principles set the standard belief that the police must work with the public in fighting crime and improving community issues. By the year 1838, the first publicly funded, organized police force with officers was created in Boston. Until the 1960s, police forces were centered not only on the protection of goods, but on the preservation of the slavery system. At the same time, the political machine began, and police leaders were picked by the local political party.

### ***1960s-1970s***

The New Deal and the civil rights movement in the 1960s brought about the passage of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. The goal of this act was to ensure access for individuals who had limited English proficiency were integral to cultural competency within public administration. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act states:

No person in the Prohibited: United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be

subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. (Taylor, 1998, p. ii)

The legislation required federal agencies to reach out to individuals, agencies, and other federally funded service providers to confront and address the cultural barriers that existed during communication and establishing an effective service delivery of public administrators. At the same time, specialized training for officers was unthinkable and police received little to no training at all. The Civil Rights Movement throughout the United States came to the prevalent civil unrest, and police began to outline sensitivity training which “sensitized” the police to minority concerns (Hennessy et al., 2001).

After the racial tension, rioting, and protest that occurred during the summer of 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders also known as the Kerner Commission (Barlow & Barlow, 1993). The commission recommended police training for controlling civil disorder and improving cultural responsiveness to improve the police-community relationship. President Johnson also established the President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice to address the Nation’s crime problem. The commission recommended the establishment of regional training centers for every state with mandated minimum training standards, curricula, and police officer certification (U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, 1967). Commissions established during Lyndon B. Johnson’s presidency led to major reforms in police training and mandates for minimum training hours for police certification.

### *1980s-2000*

During the 1980s, policing was under siege due to crime on the rise and research indicating the traditional strategies of the police were ineffective at coping with the increased crime rate. Universities and private think tanks began to study the effectiveness of standard police strategies. The elements of community policing have been visible in American policing for decades, yet most agencies operated using the traditional policing style before gaining popularity and recognition after the civil rights movement of the 1960s (Riechers & Roberg, 1990).

As crime rates began to soar in the 1980s, the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University convened an executive session on police from 1985 to 1991. The session took the lead in developing a new model for delivery of police services known as community policing which included problem-oriented policing (Goldstein, 1990). Studies published by the session as *Perspective on Policing* discussed the importance of community. Members of the session, Kelling and Moore (1989) argued that the evolution of American policing would move from politicized system to professionalism, and ultimately to community policing.

Those who viewed civil rights in health equity noticed a severe reduction in Title VI enforcement (Rosenbaum & Schmucker, 2017). The Nixon administration attempted to separate civil rights enforcement from any direct connection to program operations, which in turn caused civil rights staff to disappear along with the Office for Civil Rights (Rosenbaum & Teitelbaum, 2002). Another important legislation to mention during this



period for purposes of this study is the Disadvantaged Minority Health Improvement Act of 1990.

The Disadvantaged Minority Health Improvement Act led to the establishment of the Center of Linguistic and Cultural Competency in Health Care (Bailey, 2015). The center requires the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health (OMH) to develop the capacity of health care professions to address the cultural and linguistic barriers to health care delivery. It specifically directs the OMH to support research, demonstrations, and evaluations to test innovative models aimed at increasing knowledge and understanding of health risk factors and prevention for minorities (Bailey, 2015).

In 1991, on a California freeway, multiple law enforcement officers pulled over Rodney King following a pursuit for suspected speeding and possibly driving under the influence. He immediately encountered four Los Angeles Police Department officers who senselessly beat him with their police batons. King was struck and clubbed approximately 56 times which resulted in significant and permanent injuries to his skull and body. A bystander with a video camera filmed the incident which was then aired all over the nation. The four officers were charged criminally. However, the jury in the trial refused to convict any of them even after seeing the video over and over.

During the 1990s, after the Rodney King incident and subsequent riots, a shift began in content and focus of training efforts with an increasing emphasis on police training perspective, accounting for police culture and the day-to-day realities of law enforcement (Hennessy et al., 2001). Research and evaluation on the effectiveness of

curricula and design began to take place. As civil rights incidents continued involving police, the sensitivity training would gear up and provide reactive training. What was once known as “sensitivity training” was replaced with “diversity training” with much of the content remaining the same (Schlosser et al., 2015).

In 1994, the United States Department of Justice established the community-oriented policing services (COPS), also known as community policing, to improve relationships between law enforcement officers and the communities they serve. The community-policing push to encourage law enforcement’s interaction with the public exposed the reality that all police-citizen interactions are not equal.

In 1997, President Bill Clinton launched an initiative against racism (“One America: The President’s Initiative on Race”; Kim, 1998), which stated:

No responsibility is more fundamental than obeying the law. It is not racist to insist that every American do so ... The shocking difference in perceptions of the fairness of our criminal justice system grows out of the real experiences that too many minorities have had with law enforcement officers. Part of the answer is to have all our citizens respect the law, but the basic rule must be that the law must respect all our citizens (p. 234).

During this era, a Gallup poll showed that most Americans viewed race as “a serious problem,” even though very few identified it as the most important problem in the United States (Saad, 1997). Even though this was a time when there was no urgent need to act on the race issue, President Clinton’s ratings would indicate his need to do so. Later, in 2000, the Clinton administration introduced policies to use the results of health

disparities research as a means to establish language access as a compliance requirement for federally assisted programs. Somewhat later policies were modified by the George W. Bush administration, and expanded under the Obama administration, to resurge efforts to devise remedies that were grounded in the concept of overcoming inequality, which laid at the heart of Title VI, especially institutional policies and practices that have a discriminatory effect (Rosenbaum & Schmucker, 2017).

### ***2000-2019***

Almost 40 years since the rise of civil rights consciousness in the 1960s, various aspects of policing have been implicated such as arrests, use of force, stop and frisk, search and seizure offense charging and equality of reporting (Browning & Arrigo, 2021; Fridell et al., 2001; Skolnick and Fyfe, 1993; Walker, 2003). Not only has racial discrimination become a continuing issue for police leaders and public administrators, but its potential for destroying the reputation of police agencies and the career of officers is hard to overstress. Diversity training was designed for people to learn how to work effectively with different individuals which may increase the overall success for both the agency and the individual as seen in the recent cases of officers being charged. Evidence based research encouraged the transition from diversity training to cultural competency training on the premise that it led to better organizational outcomes (Bailey, 2015).

In a historic ruling on August 12, 2013, Federal Judge Scheindlin speculated that it would not be surprising if many police officers share the latent biases that pervade our society. If so, such biases could provide a further source of unreliability in officers' rapid, intuitive impressions of whether an individual's

movements are furtive and indicate criminality. Unconscious bias could help explain the otherwise puzzling fact that NYPD officers check 'Furtive Movements' in 48% of the stops of Blacks and 45% of the stops of Hispanics, but only 40% of the stops of Whites. (Garrison, 2014, pp. 44-45)

The role of implicit bias in generating disparities in policing is a matter of informed speculation rather than scientific fact (Worden et al., 2020). On a street in Ferguson, Missouri, 2014, a Black male, Michael Brown was fatally shot by a Ferguson police officer. This incident instigated protests and riots, the governor of Missouri to order a state of emergency, and the national guard to be activated to help restore order. Shortly after the incident, a Presidential Task Force on 21st Century Policing was created by President Obama to identify "the best means to provide an effective partnership between law enforcement and local communities that reduces crime and increases trust" (p. 79). As the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing acknowledged the role that implicit bias may play in producing disparities, the police profession began to pay attention to the science of implicit bias.

According to Skogan et al. (2015), how policing agencies integrate cultural competency awareness training or implicit bias training into their officer's instruction programs is currently under researched. Numerous policing agencies include cultural competency training as an option, but the duration and type of instruction differ among agencies (Miles-Johnson, 2015). Not only should these agencies hold culturally competent training, but they must also focus on acceptable performance in the field after training (Miles-Johnson, 2015). Efforts to address cultural competency in policing have

solely been focused on technical solutions such as in-service training and instructional approaches in ways that do not consider the adaptive challenges of shifting the mindsets of officers.

A new concept emerged as social psychological research findings casted implicit bias as a likely influence on police behavior and mindset. Implicit bias is a universal human condition made up of unconscious or semiconscious attitudes that influence behavior (Dasgupta, 2013). Human judgement, along with stereotypes can form biases that affect many groups such as: (a) women; (b) people with disabilities; (c) people of different religions groups; (d) people who are overweight; and (e) people of various races, ethnicities, or nationalities (Worden et al., 2020). These unconscious biases can affect the judgements of anyone especially when they must be made under extreme fatigue that include split second decisions. There is no systematic empirical research establishing a direct connection between implicit bias and enforcement behavior. Yet, task forces such as President Obama's Task Force on 21st century policing and scholars continue to recommend implicit bias training for police. The wide range of research certainly presents the question of what to do. Making one thing clear, police need to join with the community and decide what action is best for everyone.

In 2018, an organization led by University of South Florida criminologist, Lorie Fridell, emerged to meet the demands for further curricula encompassing implicit bias awareness training (Jackson, 2018) called Fair and Impartial Policing (FIP). FIP has led trainings in police department across the United States and Canada. The training received a 2016 grant from the Department of Justice to train all Department of Justice officers, as

well as a \$4.5 million contract to train the New York Police Department personnel to understand implicit bias and how it affects the decisions, they make. Researchers from the John F. Finn Institute wanted to find out if implicit bias training effectively reduces biased police action and released a report in 2020. The results noted that the implicit bias training could not by itself eliminate disparities in policing.

Looking back, in 1997, as one of the original Regional Community Policing Institutes created through COPS, Center for Public Safety and Justice (CPSJ) was founded to expand the understanding and application of community policing and problem-solving techniques used by law enforcement agencies. In the year 2019, CPSJ created training to increase the skills and abilities of law enforcement practitioners to use cultural humility as a foundation for interpersonal interactions and community outreach program design titled, “Diversity and Inclusion for Law Enforcement: Enhancing Cultural Responsiveness.” I was unable to locate any additional information on the course but wanted to note the existence of the effort.

Relationships between police agencies and the community they serve are critical for maintaining public safety and effective policing. Public safety and effective policing can be maintained with strong relationships and mutual trust between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. Over the last decade, it has been noted that trust affects the relationships between police and the community. Developing collaborative strategies is crucial for law enforcement agencies moving forward in today’s diverse society. In 2016, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) identified key practices for building relationships: (a) acknowledge and discuss with your

communities the challenges you are facing, (b) be transparent and accountable, (c) take steps to reduce bias and improve cultural competency, (d) maintain focus on the importance of collaboration, and be visible in the community, and (e) promote internal diversity and ensure professional growth opportunities (Engel et al., 2020).

PERF offered guidance that included strategies for building trust between the police and the community by improving training on diversity, implicit bias, and cultural competency. Especially following the 2014 incident in Ferguson, Missouri, where Officer Darren Wilson encountered two African American teenagers which significantly impacted society's attitudes towards policing. The intersection of race and the practice of policing became one of the largest issues involving the evident display of distrust racial minority communities have with the police.

### ***2020-Present***

Over 3 decades since the King incident and over 5 years since the Ferguson incident, on May 25, 2020, a 46-year-old Black American man, George Floyd, was killed while in police custody in Minneapolis. The incident was captured in a bystander's video and sparked widespread protesting across America. A Black man killed at the hands of a White police officer provoked numerous other incidents of police use of force from recent years. These events reflect that there is bias in policing. Police are supposed to be fair and impartial. The constant reminder of social injustice goes further back in history than those of us even realize. To address the current issues within the criminal justice agencies, specifically law enforcement officers, they must be trained and held accountable for their actions.

Police reform continues as a new bill is enacted on March 3, 2021, known as the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021. The Justice in Policing Act of 2021 is a comprehensive approach to work on ending racial and religious profiling, ban chokeholds and no-knock warrants, limit military equipment on American streets and require body cameras, hold police accountable in court, investigate police misconduct, empower communities to reimagine public safety in an equitable and just way, change the culture of law enforcement with training to build integrity and trust, improve transparency by collecting data on police misconduct and use-of-force, and build trust between law enforcement and the community (George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, 2021). One important note to include related to this study is the Act includes the creation of law enforcement accreditation standard recommendations based on President Obama's Taskforce on 21st Century Policing specific to training (George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, 2021).

Policing is a historically discriminatory practice (Goff & Kahn, 2012) presented along racial or ethnic lines (Harris, 2006). Reports of biased policing and the decision a police officer makes to use deadly force have become part of the United States scenery for many years. Since the beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles, 1991 to the most recent death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 2020, these incidents have continued to severely damage the relationship between officers and the community they serve. People are more likely to obey the law when they believe that those who are enforcing it have the legitimate authority to tell them what to do.



Despite all the examples of policing moving forward to adopt new trainings and policies such as PJ, implicit bias, and cultural responsiveness, challenges remain. The culture of policing is not traditionally open to change (L. Robinson, 2020). Walker (2018) suggested real barriers to reform are “the norms of the traditional police culture, particularly the warrior mentality that has dominated American policing for decades” (p. 1796). While many presidential task forces and proposals are supported by police leaders, scientific support has been scarce to whether the implementations even work towards becoming culturally responsive (Engel et al., 2020). Zimring (2020) emphasized that “local police have become the decision-makers by default,” in our decentralized federal system (p. 121). Furthermore, Hyland (2018) noted 60% of local police agencies have taken a step toward embracing change.

### **Culturally Competent Public Agency**

The conceptual framework of this study was guided primarily by Cross et al.’s cultural competence model (1989). Cross et al.’s model centers on the concept of a cultural competence continuum, which clarifies the various levels of cultural competence a person or organization possesses. More importantly, Cross’ framework outlines the importance of cultural competence within an organization or agency, and how to plan and implement cultural competence initiatives. While defining cultural competency in a wider body of research it is somewhat basic, defining the topic through the lens of public administration is more problematic.

In 1994, the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act amendments defined cultural competence (Goode & Sockalingam, 2000). However, over

the years, organizations have emerged with a variety of definitions. For this study, I will use the definition given by Cross et al. (1989) because it explains a culturally competent organization. Cross et al. defined *cultural competence* as “a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations” (p. iv). Cultural competency is having an awareness of one’s own cultural identity and views about differences and learning and building on the different cultural and community norms of individuals and their families.

When defining public administration, Norman-Major and Gooden (2014) explained the importance of looking at both words-public and administration. The language used in defining *public* include pertaining to, or affecting a population or a community, done made, or acting, for the community, open to all persons, pertaining or devoted to the welfare or well begin of the community, and the people constituting a community, state, or nation. The language used in defining *administration* include manage, supervise, and perform. Public administration is action-oriented and results-driven.

According to Bush, (2000), a culturally competent public administration is a “respect for, and understanding of, diverse ethnic and cultural groups, their histories, traditions, beliefs, and value systems,” in providing and delivering services (p. 177). Cross et al. (1989) noted that culturally competent organizations have essential elements that include: (a) value diversity, (b) capacity for cultural self-assessment (diversity audit), (c) conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact, (d) institutionalize cultural

knowledge throughout their activities, (e) adapt service delivery to reflect an understanding of cultural diversity.

Therefore, a public administrator must serve all members of the community while recognizing the value of the diverse makeup of the population and different needs within their community while being culturally responsive. In education, Khalifa et al. (2016) and Johnson (2019) observed that culturally responsive school leaders and in healthcare, need to continuously support minoritized individuals by examining their assumptions about race and culture. CCPA framework seeks to understand:

- How open is the organization to demographic and cultural diversity changes?
- Does the organization have human resources or management training programs that include equitable delivery of programs and services to diverse communities?
- Do the tools used produce effective and acceptable community outcomes and public policy?
- Are the perceptions about the organization's receptiveness to changes and outcomes a result of acquiring a diverse workforce? (Rice, 2010/2015b)

Rice (2010/2015b) explained that eight key areas are recognized in a CCPA. The key areas include administration, mission and governance, organizational culture, effective communications, personnel practices and staffing patterns, service delivery, policy and decision-making, and outreach and marketing approaches. Administrative mastery is a hallmark of good government (Mead, 2021). Government agencies are "indispensable to a secure and civilized life" (Goodsell, 2004, p. 11). Cultural

competency promotes effective delivery of services to comprehensive and inclusive public and characterizes a good government (Norman-Major & Gooden, 2014).

Research in the field of public administration that focuses on diversity and cultural competency is scarce. Although several disciplines have experience with cultural competency research and practice, public administration faced several hurdles in its acceptance as a valid area of study (Rice, 2007). The topic of cultural awareness or competency research was first conducted in 1990 by Corbin and Strauss (Shafritz et al., 2015). Corbin and Strauss emphasized the importance of conducting additional theoretical testing and sampling in the field of cultural competency which inspired researcher Bailey in 2005. Bailey (2010/2015) discovered the theory of cultural competency for public administration and public agency service delivery. Bailey contended that culturally competent organizations must have culturally competent employees who possess culturally competent awareness, knowledge, and skills. She suggested that cultural competency could be obtained by implementing equal opportunity employment, affirmative action, and diversity management (Rice, 2010/2015b).

Rice and Mathews (2014) reevaluated the theoretical foundation previously established by Bailey and expanded the discussion of diversity (race, age, and gender) to include issues such as social equity, culture, efficiency, administrative impartiality, and effectiveness within an organization. While Mathews (2010) emphasized the importance of approaching cultural competence implementation with a top-down approach, Rice (2010/2015a) emphasized the importance of comprehension and how to properly evaluate cultural competencies. Bailey, Mathews, and Rice shared the same perspective on the

important role that equal opportunity employment, affirmative action, and diversity management play within organization that adopt diversity programs and policies.

However, Marini (2015) argued that the perspective shared by Bailey, Mathews, and Rice of creating a diverse workforce through various hiring processes and policies is an excellent first step, but success relies on the culturally sensitive way the workforce is managed and trained.

Rice and Mathews (2014) explained the lack of research in the field of public service agencies is due to the field viewing cultural differences and cultural variations in public agencies as invisible, illegitimate, and negative. However, a study by Cram (2017) provided important findings that public agencies can utilize further research on the cultural competence growth of their personnel and practices. This study will further research in exploring the cultural competency for public administration in a workforce context, as well as explore the organizational culture.

The three distinct areas of focus in Cross' model combined with frameworks from Rice and Mathews (2014) and explained in Cram's (2017) conceptual model consist of cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, and cultural skills. Cultural awareness leads to cultural knowledge, and that knowledge contributes to the acquisition of cultural skill. Cultural competency is not an issue of access or equity, it is an issue of understanding (Peffer, 2014). For matters involving police, cultural incompetency can result in devastating harm to people.

The ability of public agency service delivery professionals, policing agencies, to integrate their own approach to assessment and intervention relevant human diversity

factors that are important to the process of successful outcomes (Brady, 2003) involves a cultural competency cycle. According to Norman-Major and Gooden (2014) the key elements include learning about other cultures; becoming aware and knowledgeable of cultural difference and their effect and impact on program agency and public service delivery outcomes; engaging and integrating cultural awareness, knowledge, and sensitivity into practice; thereby leading to a culturally competent public agency service delivery professional and provider. Rollins and Grooms (2019) recognized public administrators or leaders who are committed to the promotion of social equity, diversity, and cultural competency, permit organizations to work toward a genuine cultural competency ethos.

### **Cultural Responsiveness**

While composing and researching issues related to culture, different phrases have emerged throughout history and were discussed in this review including: (a) cultural competence, (b) cultural awareness, (c) cultural sensitivity, and (d) cultural responsiveness. It is necessary to rationalize the variations and why I selected the phrase cultural responsiveness for this study especially for the subject matter of policing.

Cross et al. (1989) defined cultural competence as “a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations” (p. 7). The National Association of Social Workers (2017) suggested that a social worker should possess a certain set of knowledge, skills, and values to be culturally

competent. Like social workers, officers should continuously strive to develop the knowledge and skills needed to work effectively with people from different cultures.

Cultural awareness refers to being conscious of similarities and differences between people from diverse groups. As noted in Kaihlanen et al.'s (2019) training that increases healthcare professionals' awareness of their own cultural features facilitates the communication of quality service. If an officer is without self-awareness, they risk imposing their values, beliefs, and judgments on citizens (Jacobs, 2019). This does not mean that an officer is to act in a particular manner, but rather to merely be aware of cultural issues. For those in public administration, leaders in policing, cultural awareness is incorporated in policy and procedures. Cultural awareness relates to the individuals or leaders' awareness, but not to being culturally responsive. NCCREST (2017) stated, "Cultural responsiveness is the ability to learn from and relate respectfully with people of your own culture as well as those from other cultures" (p. 6). Cultural responsiveness suggests that an officer or agency respect, build on the strengths of the culture, and attend to citizens in the contexts of their social environments.

Initiative to improve understanding of diversity through cultural awareness, competence, and responsiveness have been approached by many different scholars and practitioners in numerous professions. Since police remain White, male dominated (Reaves, 2016), finding ways to raise cultural awareness and appreciation is important. According to Myers (2017) it is possible to increase cultural responsiveness in a demographically homogenous learning environment, such as policing, when the facilitator can reflect on personal experiences and relate personal experiences to others'

experiences. Despite the controversies, the profession of policing can unite with their communities to develop collaborative strategies for moving forward to reduce bias and improve cultural competency. The idea of increasing cultural responsiveness, as suggested by the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) may be the concept that better fits the unique structure and needs of the police training environment. Regardless of what we call our approach to working with and for people of different cultures, we can fulfill our purpose by implementing key strategies experienced from policing leaders throughout their continued work in fighting crime and protecting citizens.

### **Summary**

Major themes were identified in the literature. First, PJ training has been subjected to some evaluation, which has had some effects on beliefs and attitudes (Bradford et al., 2014; Fischer, 2014; Jonathan-Zamir et al., 2015; Pickett et al., 2018; Rosenbaum & Lawrence, 2013; Skogan et al., 2015). Second, the state of research on police training has not improved since the NRC Committee completed a review in 2000. Lum et al. (2016) affirmed that "there is little or no evaluation evidence for most of the categories of training recommended by the Task Force" (p. 34). Third, for a police agency to become culturally responsive, they must identify and deliver culturally relevant services for officers and citizens (Rice, 2010/2015a). Lastly, although this research is not about the many different policing leadership styles, it remains an important discussion for this study. Pyle and Cangemi (2019), and Stamper (2016) suggested unless police training and hiring practices prioritize a transformational, community-oriented paradigm,



tensions from the problematic police behavior will not be addressed. Laub (2018) recommended that police leaders should take on the lead in reducing the number of civilians killed by the police in their agencies.

Policing agencies often reported that leadership tasked with addressing diversity was critical to the success of their efforts in policing. Without documenting and investigating what current policing leaders of today are using to successfully become culturally responsive in serving their diverse communities, the most promising practices may be a mere personnel change away from disappearing (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2016). America needs to break down the barriers between the research and community practices to create a dynamic two-way street between them. This research is designed to explore what current policing leaders are directing in response to the recent public outrage surrounding cultural responsiveness.

The current issues in policing throughout the United States needs to change their view of cultural competency and take a proactive stance. Agencies that adopt a balanced approach to diversity will be able to deliver more effective service to the people in the communities in which they serve (Whitfield, 2019). The purpose of this research is to explore what changes have been implemented for public administrators in policing since the recommendations described in the President's Task Force (2015) and the passing of the Justice in Policing Act (2021) in America.

Chapter 3 will give a detailed explanation of the research method for the qualitative phenomenological study of 10 to 20 law enforcement leaders who hold a current position as chief or sheriff in the state of North Carolina. The chief or sheriff may

appoint his next in command, such as assistant chief or chief deputy, to interview for the agency. The appropriateness of this particular design established from the research questions will be discussed in Chapter 3. The population, sampling, collection of data, and the data analysis will also be discussed in Chapter 3.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

As described in Chapter 1, the purpose of this qualitative phenomenology study is to explore cultural competency policies and practices from a leader's perspective to improve relationships between police and citizens in the diverse communities they serve. This chapter contains an outline of the rationale for the methodological choices that frame this study. Following an explanation of the relevance of a qualitative methodology and specifically a phenomenological approach, I discuss my role as the researcher. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the insights and challenges posed by my positionality and the steps that I took to ensure the trustworthiness of the research design.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

When a researcher seeks to establish a research design that will support finding rich data to explain a phenomenon, they must begin by identifying the phenomenon and identifying why the phenomenon should be researched. Then, the appropriate method of the study is generated by consideration of the research questions and the appropriate method by which those questions could be studied (Rudestam & Newton, 2015).

Research designs are blueprints that guide the decisions about how and when to collect data, what data to gather, who to collect data from, and how to analyze data (O'Sullivan et al., 2017). The general research design of my study was exploratory research, which helps researcher understand a problem more efficiently, gives the research design a better focus, and significantly limits any unintended biased information. In this study I emphasized the exploratory research using a qualitative research design.

Qualitative research refers to “research involving detailed, verbal descriptions of characteristics, case, and settings” (O’Sullivan et al., 2017, p. 6). Qualitative research has advantages in research studies, including the collection of data using a holistic approach, providing data regarding lived experiences of participants, allowing a general overview of a situation compared to isolated quantitative findings, providing an in-depth approach to data analysis and discussion, orienting data with regard to time and place, illuminating the reality of a phenomenon, analysis using inductive methods, and allowing for multiple interpretive ideas regarding a given phenomenon (Taylor, 2013). Each one of these attributes of qualitative research aided me in choosing the qualitative method for this study.

Furthermore, qualitative research has a variety of inquiry frameworks as described in Patton (2015), including basic qualitative inquiry, qualitative case study, grounded theory and realism, phenomenology and heuristic inquiry, social constructivism and narrative inquiry, systems theory, ethnography and autoethnography, and interactive and participatory qualitative applications. Each of these approaches has a different paradigmatic, philosophical, or theoretical orientation. Deciding which approach a researcher should take is not an easy determination. I gave full consideration to the research design as explained by Ravitch and Riggen (2017). It is important to understand how frameworks, research questions, and research methodology are all interconnected.

Reflecting on the CCPA framework alongside the research problem and research purpose assisted me with answering the researcher questions:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of police leaders who have implemented culturally responsive practices?

RQ2: How do police leaders influence cultural responsiveness in their agency?

The most appropriate methodology determined for this study was a phenomenology approach.

A phenomenology study examines the reality of everyday life and how individuals make sense of their everyday experiences with a deeper understanding. Phenomenology prioritizes and investigates how humans experience the world and every phenomenon can become a topic of phenomenological inquiry (Patton, 2015). Participants in the phenomenology approach need to have experienced the phenomenon. As a deputy sheriff in North Carolina, I know every law enforcement professional in North Carolina has taken a class on diversity as an in-service requirement within the last 2 years, and I believed police leaders have dealt with many situations of responding to someone of a different cultural background with the changing demographics in North Carolina.

Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that describes the meaning of lived experience of a phenomenon for individuals. In the case of this study, the phenomenon was the experience of police leaders. The purpose of this research was to consider how leaders in the law enforcement profession may focus on and give attention to the phenomenon (cultural responsiveness) in the world around them (the community). Manen (1990) explained the basic objective of phenomenological inquiry is to reduce personal experiences with a phenomenon to a description of a common assumption.

Staying focused to generalizable knowledge in a phenomenological study, the research goal must be a specific phenomenon experienced by a specific person (Patton, 2015) or leader, as indicated in RQ1. Understanding the lived experiences of police leaders, chiefs and sheriffs, and how they influence their subordinates to become culturally responsive is something I believed has a commonality.

Qualitative research methods allow flexibility in obtaining data from case to case in the same study. By applying a qualitative research method and a phenomenological approach, I can focus on the individuals' perceptions and their personal experiences to better understand how leaders influence their agencies in becoming culturally responsive to the diverse communities they serve. I used purposeful sampling to seek the rich information from participants who were likely to contribute to a deeper understanding of culturally responsive policy and how their leadership influences subordinates. Purposeful sampling is a nonprobability method that is based upon the characteristics of the population as well as the purpose of the study, and it improved the credibility of this study and reduced bias (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2018), phenomenological research involves studying a small number of participants to develop patterns and relationships of meaning. For this phenomenological study, I identified a specific population with limited characteristics to help limit bias. This included participants who are in administrative, leadership roles in law enforcement agencies in North Carolina who have experience with using culturally responsive practices. These participants were identified from a survey sent to the North Carolina Association of Chiefs of Police and the North Carolina

Sheriffs' Association inquiring as to whether they have knowledge of culturally responsive practices and if they would be willing to volunteer for the study.

Determining an adequate sample size of necessary participants for a study can be difficult. The sample size should be large enough to obtain valuable information that is relevant to the study but also should reach data saturation. According to Guest et al. (2006), data saturation is essential to qualitative research and occurs when there is no new information or themes that can be observed within the data. Data saturation is difficult to define because there are no standard guidelines, but instead some scholars use suggested parameters. Creswell (1998) indicated a phenomenological study may reach saturation with five to 25 participants. Morse (1994) suggested no fewer than six participants should be used for saturation. While considering data saturation, I needed to also consider theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation “occurs when all the main variations of the phenomenon have been identified and incorporated into the emerging theory” (Guest et al., 2006, p. 65). To obtain a sample size that may be appropriate for this study, I interviewed 10 police leaders to determine repeated themes and patterns in consideration of the phenomenon. When I reached a point where no new information was obtained, data saturation or data satisfaction resulted, and I ceased data collection (see Hennink & Kaiser, 2020).

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) data collection can occur through interviews that provide insight into the human experience. Interviewing is a strategy of collecting important information needed for analysis of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2014). Data sources for this study included in-depth interviews with police

leaders who use cultural competency practices, official policy documents collected from participants, and researcher observations. The overall organization of this study was designed to provide insight into what culturally responsive police leaders do to influence their agencies to better the communication between police officers and civilians in the communities they serve.

Communities have changed and will continue to transform because of the increasing diversity of the population. The differences in communities have been observed to cause additional conflicts in communication and interactions between officers and citizens. Officers who serve citizens in those communities face unique challenges that can be clarified through education and training on diversity and inclusion. I explored the policies and influences of police leaders that promote a culturally competent agency to provide insight into what is necessary for other agencies to begin cultivating a strategy towards becoming a culturally responsive organization.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative studies, the role of the researcher is considered an instrument of the data collection process. Since the researcher was the instrument of data collection, acknowledging personal subjectivities is of vital importance to rigorous and valid research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The researcher performed an ongoing assessment of their identity, positionality, and subjectivities, known as reflexivity, because it influences the construction of and relational contribution to meaning and interpretation throughout the research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). During data collection and analysis, the



researchers' ongoing reflexivity was essential to the trustworthiness of the research design.

I am currently a deputy sheriff and a criminal justice instructor in higher education at a community college, which brings many different assumptions about the experiences of cultural responsiveness in policing. Keeping a research journal throughout the study supported me in developing proper research habits related to actively engaging in research reflexivity. The journal also aided me in reflecting personal thoughts throughout different points in the process, facilitate me with formulating ideas for changes to the research approach, and assisted me with developing meaningful questions to ask peers, advisors, or committee members (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Phenomenology has three practices that direct phenomenological research including: (a) reduction, (b) descriptions, and (c) essence (Giorgi, 2005). The role of the researcher in pursuing the heart of the phenomenon is one of the practices known as phenomenological reduction (Lichtman, 2009). The researcher must remove themselves from the topic of research and must search for all conceivable significances of the phenomenon. To remove oneself from the research topic, I committed to transparency and honesty, implement appropriate research tools such as bracketing and open coding, and triangulate data collection in in-depth interviews and information gathered in the literature review presented in Chapter 2. To address the practice of description within the phenomenological research, I will ask the participants questions that will allow them to reflect on their lived experience within policing, the organizational culture, and hurdles they faced during the last year since the 2020 pandemic. The essence of the researcher is

the attempt to discover a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Lichtman, 2009). I will use questions that will probe the depth of the leaders' personal experiences, including what justified their reasoning.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection**

I purposefully selected between 12 and 20 participants from a survey delivered through North Carolina Chiefs of Police and North Carolina Sheriffs Association to identify leaders in policing who have knowledge on cultural competency and are willing to be interviewed for research purposes. The sampling consists of police leaders who serve urban, suburban, and rural populations in North Carolina that represent different communities and cultures. Inclusion criteria will consist of the following: (a) provide valid informed consent prior to any study procedure, (b) leaders who currently serve in a leadership role in policing, (c) leaders who worked with communities that reflect cultural diversity, (d) implemented policy or practice to include diversity training, cultural awareness training, implicit bias, or any inclusion subject. Exclusion criteria will consist of a law enforcement leader who is not sworn as an officer or does not engage in cultural responsiveness.

### **Instrumentation**

The most appropriate data collection tool for the study topic is in-depth interviewing of police leaders. To recruit participants for this study, I will contact the North Carolina Association of Chiefs of Police and the North Carolina Sheriffs Association for assistance in recruiting leaders of agencies across the state. Participants

will be asked to complete the cultural competency public agency self-assessment (see Appendix A) to help identify those leaders in law enforcement who strive for culturally competent organizations. The goal of the self-assessment tool is to answer many questions including:

- Do the agency's leadership and personnel understand and respect the cultures of the clients it serves?
- Do agency programs and services address the unique needs and concerns of the cultures of the clients it serves?
- Is cultural competence reflected in the agency's mission, operations, policies, practices, and procedures?
- Are the agency leadership and staff representative of the clients it serves?
- Does the agency provide language assistance and/or translation to clients who do not speak English?
- Does the agency collaborate with community groups to provide culturally diverse services and programs?
- What processes does the agency utilize to remove barriers that inhibit culturally diverse services and practices?
- Does the agency have a dedicated budget to promote cultural competency?  
(Rice, 2010/2015b).

I will purposefully select between 12 and 20 participants from the responses emailed from the Associations. Another data collection tool will be the observation of

police leaders who are interviewed to see how they interact in social situations within their community.

The sampling will consist of police leaders who serve urban, suburban, and rural populations in North Carolina that represent different communities and cultures.

Inclusion criteria includes the following: (a) provide valid informed consent before any study procedure, (b) leaders who currently serve in a leadership role in policing, (c) leaders who worked with communities that reflect cultural diversity, (d) implemented policy or practice to include diversity training, cultural awareness training, or any diversity or inclusion subject. Exclusion criteria consist of a law enforcement leader who is not sworn as an officer or does not engage in cultural responsiveness determined from the cultural competence public agency self-assessment (see Appendix A). After the leaders are identified and consent to volunteer, I will determine 12 unique leaders from diverse demographics for an in-person semi-structured interview that will be audio recorded. The demographics will be determined with the use of the U.S. Census Bureau's finalized count mandated by the Constitution (Colby & Ortman, 2015). The census can provide secondary data that can support the design and implementation of policies and laws in the government sectors by promoting the need for law enforcement organizations to enhance additional training in response to the diversity of their communities.

Once the association has sent the list of prospective candidates to me, the participants will be contacted via email. I will ask the participants to participate in this qualitative study and explain that they have the right to remain anonymous and maintain the right to refuse to participate in or withdraw from the study at any time without

repercussions. In the event any participant chooses to withdraw from the study, all original data associated with that individual will be destroyed upon notification. The discussion about the rights of the participant's rights to withdrawal at any time from this study will be ethically imperative.

Participants will be contacted through email associated via my university email address. Ten days after the initial contact, those candidates who have not responded will receive a follow-up email regarding participation. The email will begin with an introduction of me, the background of the study, and the purpose of the study, along with an invitation to participate in the study. If the candidate does not respond after a follow-up email, I will choose another participant from the association's recommendation.

Once a participant has volunteered for the study, an informed consent release form will be emailed to the individual. The form will need to be signed, returned to my university email with a "I consent" response before the interview, and reviewed at the respective interview. After the participants have agreed and signed the informed consent, I will schedule interviews via in-person, on zoom, or on the telephone.

Instrumentation for this study will involve me, interviews, field notes, and participants. I will be an instrument of this study because I will interview the participants using a set of semi-structured interview questions for collecting data for the study. An example of these questions is listed in Appendix B. The interview questions will be open-ended, followed by probing questions to allow participants to offer their personal experiences and opinions with specific questions for agency administrators and service delivery personnel on cultural competency developed by Rice (2007). For the purposes of

this phenomenological study, I will act as the instrument for data collection by engaging the interviewee with an in-depth interview. To guarantee participation accuracy, the interviews will be audio recorded. I will also take notes during the interview to focus on key points to reflect to the interviewee as to clarify any confusion.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The interview data will be analyzed using a framework analysis based on qualitative content analysis methods (see Smith & Firth, 2011). Framework analysis is applied policy research that is used to manage data and analysis systematically (Smith & Firth, 2011). Using framework analysis allows the researcher to analyze data both by theme and case to identify themes and patterns in relation to the codes that are identified from Rice's (2010/2015b) "CCPAs" framework along with the public agency questions on cultural competency (see Appendix B). I considered using this analysis because it will support with identifying similarities as well as differences in the qualitative data.

Making sense of the data begins during fieldwork by noting emergent patterns or themes while observing and interviewing. Then coding strategy commences with transcribing interviews in a Microsoft Word document. The best option for me is to begin playing the recording and letting the dictation ability type out each word. Next, I will replay the recorded interview and make sure the transcription contains full and accurate word-for-word written rendition of the questions and answers. The transcripts will be organized with each question in regular font and each answer in *italic* font. The interview data will be saved and secured on a single hard drive that is password protected to ensure the data protection procedure. The data protection procedure will be explained to the

participants, so they have the confidence in the process and the ability to speak openly to me.

The transcript will be transferred to qualitative data analysis software. I will define, find, and mark in the text the excerpts that have relevant concepts, themes, events, examples, names, places, or dates as described by Rubin and Rubin (2012). The codes will be utilized from culturally competent organizations by Cross et al. (1989) that include valuing diversity, capacity for cultural self-assessment, conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact, institutionalize culture knowledge throughout their activities, and adapt service delivery to reflect an understanding of cultural diversity. As well as the concepts and questions from the public agency questions on cultural competency for agency administrators and service delivery personnel (see Appendix B), the CCPA's theoretical framework developed by Rice (2010/2015b) will be utilized to understand:

- How open is the organization to demographic and cultural diversity changes?
- Does the organization have human resources or management training programs that include equitable delivery of programs and services to diverse communities?
- Do the tools used produce effective and acceptable community outcomes and public policy?
- Are the perceptions about the organization's receptiveness to changes and outcomes a result of acquiring a diverse workforce? (Rice, 2010/2015b)

I will code all possible forms of cultural competency, culturally responsive, diversity, implicit bias, inclusion, policy, practice, motivation, and community outcomes. Next, the codes will be organized into themes that reflect the organization. The data set will then be established with analysis. As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), the type of thematic analysis for this research will be “codebook” approach to support the CCPAs’ theory. The rich information must answer the research questions and deliver lived experiences of participants.

Qualitative data analysis software helps in explanation, understanding, and interpretation of the participants in a study. Researching qualitative data analysis software is a tedious task as suggested by Dr. Pezalla, Associate Director of Curriculum and Assessment for the Center of Research Quality at Walden University (Laureate Education, 2017). There are many choices to choose from in a realm of products. I began by searching the Internet for qualitative data analysis software. There are options to purchase, use free trials, and free services.

My first attempt at qualitative software began in with qualitative reasoning and analysis course at Walden University. I downloaded and began a free trial version of NVivo by QSR International because of the recommendation from the University and other classmates. NVivo was able to do many things, I found that it would take an entire course on “how to use the software.” It was not simple and as Dr. Pezalla explained it is a qualitative data management program that will only facilitate the process of qualitative analysis. However, Walden University does offer tutoring and support through the academic skills center, which I have access to.



During the research process, I found a few other choices of qualitative data analysis software. After gathering information from reviews and comparisons, the researcher found MAXQDA and Coding Analysis Toolkit. MAXQDA by VERBI Software costs about half the price of the NVivo software and offered a free 14-day trial download. After downloading the software, I watched a video on how to use the software. As the researcher watched a demo video and imported the sample interview transcripts from Microsoft Word and began highlighting themes, I realized how simplistic its use was. MAXQDA software can perform content analysis and comparative analysis. Having the ability to perform content analysis was what I needed in a software. I will use the MAXQDA software for this qualitative study while continuing to explore other software during the research process.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

The rigor of qualitative research methods has been debated for decades. For qualitative research, the researcher must affirm that the findings are faithful to participants' experiences and that the investigation has quality and rigor (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Quality and rigor concerns happen throughout the entire research process. To judge the quality, rigor, and credibility of a qualitative study, Frey (2018) suggested the terminology of *trustworthiness* to assert why the findings and implications can be viewed as acceptable and worthy to the reader. Ensuring the quality, trustworthiness, and credibility of qualitative research is taking a relational approach to and stance on analysis. Ravitch and Carl (2016) explained a relational approach to research requires an open mind with a receptive sensibility to learn with and from the research. The two terms,

validity, and trustworthiness are commonly used to describe the processes to assess the rigor of qualitative studies (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Researchers can use methods to help increase the rigor, thus validity of our qualitative research.

Trustworthiness is established through different conditions such as: (a) credibility (internal validity), (b) transferability (external validity), (c) dependability (reliability), and (d) confirmability (objectivity).

### **Credibility**

Credibility, internal validity, is the researcher's ability to take all the complexities in a study and patterns that are not easily explained (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In this research, the intended focus of the study is a law enforcement's leadership practices that are aimed to create a more culturally responsive organization to serve citizens in their community. To report an accurate statement by those whose lived experiences are reported, I will send the transcript to the interviewee to be transparent. During the final phase of the research, member checks and follow-up interviews will allow me to check any assumptions with participants in a meaningful collaboration for feedback and analysis. Member checks are described by Ravitch and Carl (2016) as a process to check in with the participants to see what they think and feel about various aspects of the research about them.

### **Transferability**

Transferability, external validity, is the idea of developing descriptive, context-relevant statements and using the different contextual factors of the study design for another study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Using cultural competency for the public

administrator framework will allow me to connect the methods of collection and analysis of the study beyond the local context. By positioning this study within the literature of cultural competency, public administration, and policy, I will consider the issues of police-citizen relationships can be addressed from a unique point of view.

### **Dependability**

Dependability, like reliability, entails using a well-articulated rationale that the researcher can argue for solid research design (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Dependability strategies are the processes of data collection, data analysis, and theory generation that the researcher must explain when changed. A way to ensure the research is dependable and valid is through triangulation, which involves the use of different methods, such as observation, documents, field notes, and individual interviews (Shento, 2004). Police leader interviews, observations, and policy documents present a wide variety of data sources that can be checked against one another.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability is acknowledging and exploring the ways the researcher's biases and prejudices plan our interpretations of the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Having a committee during the dissertation process is a way of ensuring confirmability. Another alternative for providing the data can be confirmed by someone other than me by sharing my codes and analysis for feedback through peer debriefing.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I discuss the ideas, research design, research methodology, and instrument development for conducting this study. The use of a phenomenology approach

as a research design, which will unveil the meaning and essence of the lived experiences of police leaders in relation to law enforcement. I also focus on the population and the data instruments to gather data for the study. The research sample for this study will consist of 12 to 20 police leaders who currently hold an administrative position of sheriff, chief, or designated by those positions in a law enforcement agency in the State of North Carolina. Qualitative data will be collected using face-to-face interviews to address leadership practices associated with the phenomena of culturally responsive practices as those in leadership position influence policy and practices within a public administration organization.

Chapter 4 will begin with an introduction. The settings and demographics of participants will be described. Next, the data collection process will be discussed, followed by the data analysis procedure. Then, the evidence of trustworthiness will be given. Finally, the results will give detail to the broad themes and themes of the study and a final summary.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of leaders in law enforcement regarding cultural competency in response to the diverse communities they serve. CCPA was applied to help understand how policing public service agencies identify areas to improve the quality of their programs and services to culturally diverse communities. Furthermore, I sought to understand how their experiences answered the primary research questions that guided the study:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of police leaders who have implemented culturally responsive practices?

RQ2: How do police leaders influence cultural responsiveness in their agency?

In this chapter, I explain the results in seven sections. Section 1 covers the settings in which the data collection occurred. Section 2 includes the discussion of the participant demographics. Section 3 is made up of the data collection procedures. Section 4 comprises the data analysis. Section 5 contains evidence of trustworthiness. Section 6 includes the evaluations of the results and Section 7 contains the summary of Chapter 4. Direct quotes from the participants will be found throughout this chapter. Codes (ex. P1) are used to maintain the anonymity of the study participants.

### **Setting**

The volunteering research participants were police chiefs and sheriffs who were sworn in the state of North Carolina or a leader within the agency appointed by the chief or sheriff to participate. The certification of police chiefs, sheriffs, and leadership

positions are through the North Carolina Department of Justice. The state consists of 100 county sheriffs and approximately 330 police departments. Participants were from rural, urban, and suburban areas throughout the state.

### **Demographics**

The proposed sample size was 12-20 leaders in law enforcement in North Carolina. There were initially 18 participants who responded to the invitation email. The initial participants ranged across the state of North Carolina, from the coast to the mountains. Only 10 of the 18 participants completed the self-assessment and interview. Of the 10 persons who completed the interview, seven were White, one was Black, one was Asian, and one was Mixed. All participants were male and in a leadership role of Chief of Police (6), Deputy Chief of Sheriff's Office (2), or Sergeant of Police (2). With all the years of law enforcement experience they possessed, I expected that each of the leaders held numerous positions in law enforcement throughout their careers.

### **Data Collection**

I began the data collection process by recruiting participants. Initially I planned to use the associations to gain email addresses for the participants. However, the email addresses were located on the sheriff's association website, which allowed access to all 100 county sheriff email addresses. I also established a list of police departments from the Federal Bureau of Investigation crime data explorer of approximately 330 police departments located in North Carolina. I used Google to search for each of the police department webpages to gain access to the chief email addresses. Over half of the police departments from the list posted the chief's information on their website. An invitational

email was sent to the sheriffs and chiefs with detailed information about the study and the amount of dedication required to complete participation, including the self-assessment, interview, and member check.

Eighteen initial responses to the invitational email began with the participant consenting with the words “I consent.” When the participant consented, a follow-up email was sent listing the next steps for participation to include the completion of the self-assessment, providing an address for the thank you gift, and offering some dates and times available for the interview. After the date and time was established, a zoom invitation link was sent, or a location for face-to-face meeting was determined. The data collection process began on October 8, 2021, and was completed on November 12, 2021.

Some of the potential participants did not respond to the follow-up email and were sent an additional email 7 days later, and they were set aside in case I needed additional participants. I began interviewing the participants who scheduled a date and time on their scheduled interview date. At the beginning of each interview, I explained the recording of the interview for transcription purposes. The recording devices used to record the interviews included the Zoom recorder, which was digitized and then stored on a computer in my home and a digital audio recorder by Sony for backup. The use of these devices simultaneously provided the opportunity to take written notes while recording the sessions. Three of the interviews were completed in person while the remaining seven interviews were completed on Zoom through the linked invitation.

Once the recording began, I shared background information to begin the rapport building stage of the interview. The questions for the interview were not given in the

exact order as presented in the interview guide. As the participant responded to questions, I remained on the subject matter the participant brought up to dive deeper into their experiences and gain thick, rich data. The interviews lasted between 60 to 90 minutes and did not exceed the 90-minute mark.

After the interview reached the 90-minute mark or the participant had answered the questions, the recording devices were shut off, and I asked each participant if there were any questions. Questions asked focused on if I believed this research would really help bring further research to the profession with the expansion of training for our state and if they could see the results of the study. I explained my hopes of bringing awareness from their experiences to the issue, and I would share the results along with the ProQuest link when it was completed. I then thanked them for their participation and sharing their experience and knowledge with me. I sent each of the participants their interview transcript for verification and questions about any concerns.

### **Data Analysis**

A thorough review of the literature section was conducted before the interview process began. The literature review provided meaningful and applicable research findings that helped explore the lived experiences of the research participants, leaders in law enforcement. After 10 interviews, I reached data saturation and began the analysis phase of the study. I used large qualitative data sets applying a thematic analysis to emphasize the patterns of meaning. Specific data were selected that were part of the phenomenon and evaluated as relevant data to answer the research questions.



I began by exploring similarities and relationships between the data. I printed and highlighted the initial areas of each transcript and added descriptive labels. The transcripts were entered into the MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2020 qualitative software. Each participant transcript was listed as P1 through P10. Any meaningful portions of data that I selected were open coded into the descriptive codes. After reviewing all the codes, I began to reflect on how all the categories were related to each other, which allowed me to merge the codes into several categories. During this process, more categories were identified and provided an additional code. My final step involved merging the categories into themes, which completed the analysis for each aspect of the results.

The role of the researcher in pursuing the phenomenon is known as phenomenological reduction (Lichtman, 2009). The researcher must remove themselves from the topic. To remove myself from the topic, I implemented appropriate research tools such as bracketing, open coding, and triangulation. I used a research journal to write memos throughout the data collection and analysis as a means of examining and reflecting upon my engagement with the data for bracketing. Portions of data were selected with open coding. Data triangulation involved cross-referencing field notes, policy documents, and participant interviews.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

I conducted the data collection process with the utmost ethical standards set by the Institutional Review Board at Walden University. After the Institutional Review Board approval (approval number 10-08-21-0671272), I obtained the emails of the sheriffs and chiefs in the state of North Carolina and sent the approved letter of invitation

along with the consent form to each participant who responded with “I consent” to participate in this study. Once the participants responded, I sent a list of the next steps, which included the self-assessment and asking the participant to provide some dates and times for an interview. I then assigned a participant number (1-10) for each transcription and recording to provide anonymity for each participant. Once the interview began, I thanked the participant and told them that I would send a review of the interview transcription within a week for them to check for accuracy and meaning.

### **Credibility**

To create trustworthiness from data collected, several measures should take place (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Credibility relates to the data being reported as acceptable. I contributed to the credibility of the data by providing the participants with a review of my interpretations using the technique of member checking. After I transcribed the interview using Microsoft Word, I emailed the transcription to the participant for review and to check to see if my understanding captured the meaning of the responses of the participant. During the interviews, I probed for additional information by asking for examples to provide a thick, rich description of the participants’ experiences of the phenomenon. I continued interviewing participants until I saturated the data by seeing no new information from the participants.

### **Transferability**

Transferability is the degree to which the findings of a study can be used in other situations or with other participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To ensure transferability of the findings, I selected positioning within the literature of cultural competency, public

administration, and policy. I described the findings within this study and include the codes, and themes (Saldana, 2016). The variation in the participants in this study were personalities and their belief as it relates to cultural competency. Each participant must have experienced in working as a leader in law enforcement and experienced diversity. Their words and experience provided transferability in the analysis phase.

Keeping a reflective journal assisted me to identify the theoretical lens most appropriate for my research. As I continued in the analysis of the research, I used the journal to work through the implications of the CCPA framework. As I used the journal to critically reflective way in a manner that would consider who would benefit from the approach I took to my research. Using the journal allowed me to make my experiences, feelings, opinions, and thoughts visible as I acknowledged that as part of the research design, data coding, data analysis, and interpretations process.

### **Dependability**

Dependability is achieved when the research is presented in a way that enables other researchers to replicate the process described in this study (Yin, 2018). Police leader interviews, mission statements, and policy documents present a wide variety of data sources that can be checked against one another.

### **Confirmability**

Although it may never be completely bias free, providing a clear explanation of the purpose of the study and the process undertaken to complete the participation of this study would improve the validity and plausibility of the study. All aspects of data collection and concerns of confidentiality and anonymity were stated to the participant in

advance to ensure truthfulness of the responses. An alternative for providing the data can be confirmed by someone other than me by sharing my codes and analysis for feedback through peer debriefing. Peer debriefing took place before final coding of themes.

### **Results**

I explored law enforcement leaders lived experiences and perceptions of cultural responsiveness while leading their agency. Leaders' responses to interview questions provided insights into research question one and research question two. Research question one was written to inquire about the lived experiences of policing leaders who implement culturally responsive practices. Research questions two regarded how they influenced culturally responsive practices in policing. I analyzed the recorded responses from the experiences, transcribed the answers and identified the themes of culturally responsive practices that aided the implementation and influences for their agency. The results of the data analysis disclose three broad themes: visionary professional practice, organizational commitment, and community engagement as shown in Figure 3.

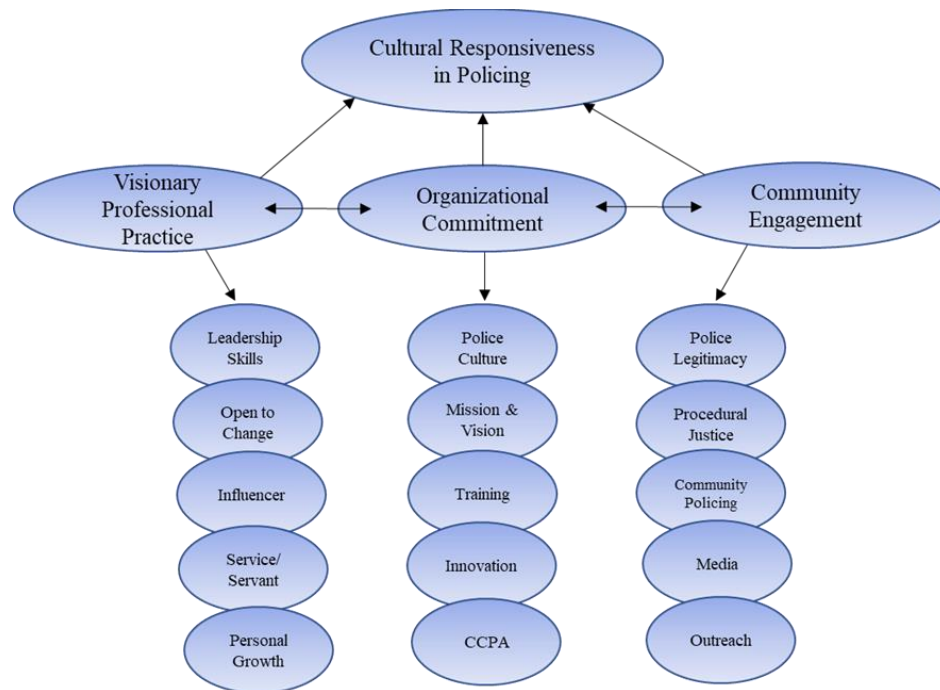
**Figure 3***Broad Themes of Cultural Responsiveness in Policing*

The three broad themes identified created an exploration into cultural responsiveness in the policing profession. Leaders who participated considered a multitude of ideas about the best practices for their community. The broad themes developed are visionary professional practice, organizational commitment, and community engagement as shown in Figure 4. The themes established for visionary professional practice are: (a) leadership skills, (b) open to change, (c) influencer, (d) service/servant, and (e) personal growth. Organizational commitment has five themes: (a) police culture, (b) mission and vision, (c) training, (d) innovation, (e) CCPA. Community engagement also has themes: (a) police legitimacy, (b) procedural justice, (c) community policing, (d) media, and (e) outreach. The identity of the participants was protected by referencing each participant as P1 through P10. The numbers were assigned to the

participant as they consented to the study, they were not assigned in the order to which they were interviewed.

**Figure 4**

*Cultural Responsiveness in Policing*



**Broad Theme: Visionary Professional Practice**

The broad theme of a visionary profession practice was established from the leadership skills, the leader's ability to be open to change, their influence on subordinates, the leader who serves and is a servant, and the personal growth and development of the leader. One participant suggested that even in places where police are vilified the most, there is a voice of reason, and they can drown out the extremists on both sides, and actual work can be accomplished if maybe we establish what type of

leadership gets us across the bridge and gets us to a place where we need to be in this new diverse world.

Themes: Leadership skills, Open to change, Influencer, Service/Servant, and Personal growth as shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5**

*Theme of Visionary Professional Practice for Cultural Responsiveness in Policing*



***Theme: Leadership Skills.***

The beginning of the interview was focused on building rapport with the participants. After the initial questions, I wanted to understand the leaders' experience, background, and leadership style. The life experiences of the leaders interviewed varied from a career path in the military to a much different career path, mental health. Some of the leaders planned to be leaders, and some evolved as they became more educated and wanted to be a part of the change. P7 stated: "I don't really even consider myself a leader. I just happen to be in those roles sometimes."

The leadership skills and characteristics that emerged from the leaders' experiences in this study suggested that a policing leader should have accountability, empathy, integrity, be culturally competent, and have interpersonal communication. A leader must be adaptive to a particular situation, depending on whom you're dealing with, or what the issue is and what is needed at the time, kind of like a chameleon (P1). P4 stated, "I trust people will do the right thing. Leadership is defined in many ways, but I

do know the opposite of leadership is division. You can either bring people together or you can tear them apart. I believe my math is to multiply and add, not to subtract and divide.”

A culturally competent leader possesses the skills, knowledge, and attitude necessary to build relationships with different cultures, especially in a diverse community. P8 states, “he ensures his interactions with diverse groups by attending diversity focused conferences and interacting with different cultures as a peer, instead of as a police chief, at different events.” P4 states, “I think knowing your environment and knowing what your constituents consider to be important as you provide service to them.”

***Theme: Open to Change***

The categories that created this theme included awareness, progress, and drive to enact change for the future. Leaders who participated had a level of acceptance and conscious awareness of the possibilities that change was needed across a range of situations and circumstances for the future of policing. First, it starts with the words. The word “law enforcement” means that we are responsible for enforcing laws. “We not only enforce laws, but we value the needs of the community with passion and perspective, we are policing (P8).” Another participant explained his thought on the words, “The best officers understand what policing, not law enforcement is, because I think those two words are very, very different and we use them interchangeably, but they're very, very different. In my opinion, and you have officers that understand policing and how important policing is, you got a much better officer than somebody that just wants to get out and write tickets and get misdemeanor drug arrests (P1).” Another participant agrees



with part of the change beginning with the words, he describes “the title of animal control and how it implies that we’re going to tell you what you’re going to do with your animal. It’s just like the SWAT team. Everybody knows it’s bad when you get the SWAT team called in. Instead, our team is called the special response team not the SWAT team because of the way it sounds. Instead of animal control, we now call it animal services.”

Traditional policing is something that has been evolving for years. Officers are viewed as the guardians of public safety, whose responsibilities are to respond to reported and observed crimes. As explained by P6, “we still have a law enforcement role. And I go into the areas in my community that are challenged, and I tell them from a law enforcement perspective, my job is to reduce crime and the fear of crime.” Yet as P2 explains that “we can’t police with a traditional policing. Our world has changed.” Instead, P6 continues to explain that there's another component, we have to demonstrate the presence of justice, so we can't disenfranchise anyone when we're not looking. To do that, P6, “I meet with community members, and I talk about how best to accomplish that task and how best to address the elephant in the room, specifically with the African American community and LGBTQ community, that believe that law enforcement is, the spirit of what they do is not in keeping with their constitutional rights, and they believe this wholeheartedly and, in many respects, I get where they're coming from. We law enforcement created this. The issues that presented itself over the murder of George Floyd only exasperated the feelings of many. And so, we have to address that and have processes by which to mitigate that problem.”

***Theme: Influencer***

The categories for the theme influencer were motivator and mentor. This theme assists in answering RQ2, how the leader influences subordinates in their agency. Each chief expressed highly valuing each officer's role within the agency. Participants voiced that getting involved in each employee's success and well-being while building trust was a way to influence behavior and expectations towards becoming a successful public service agency.

One participant described being a brand-new chief and understanding that there was anxiety with a new chief coming into the department. P6 explains, "I made a point to have a one on one, 30-minute conversation with every one of my employees. I said listen, I know I'm the chief and I know you know that I'm the boss, but our conversation isn't about that, our conversation is about me getting to know you and you getting to know me." He continued to explain how subordinates want to know three things; Does their supervisor or leader like them? Does my leader or can my leader help me? And if my leader is not capable or is not willing to help me that relationship breaks down very quickly. And lastly, they want to know whether I can trust my leader? As a leader, my job is to establish a relationship based on those three principles and we could have mutual respect."

P6 stated, "I would rather impress upon my staff why we want to accomplish a task or a mission and why it's important and why I want them to embrace it, as opposed to mandating it." P6 and P8 agreed that a leader needs to know if there is a problem and if there is a problem, and as the leader if they failed to establish a process by which they

should have known, they are vicariously responsible and liable for everything their people do. Another participant believes that all discipline should come to his desk because P2 states, "If you're not fair and one supervisor disciplines an officer one way and then another officer, which is their favorite, in another way, then the behavior is not going to be corrected. I need to know what complaints are going on and how my supervisors are handling it because I don't know what training they have had with my predecessors." A leader is in front of a wagon and he's helping his people pull the wagon (P7), leading from the front (P3), and even sometimes from the back (P9), to allow the team to flourish, develop, and grow.

***Theme: Service/Servant***

The theme service/servant was developed from categories which included to serve, servant, guardian, and bring value to others. These questions also included what type or style of leadership they considered themselves. Each of the participants considered themselves as a servant, adaptive or transformational leader. Each participant described how they served their community. The leader must be innovative and care for the community which they serve or be service driven.

One leader (P2) expresses the goals he has set for himself and the officers, "Our goal is very simple: We try each day to make the chaotic, fast-paced world around us a better place. It starts with a smile, a wave, a kind word of encouragement, holding the door open for someone, paying it forward, and accepting one another regardless of religion, race, creed, gender, background, or what side of these tracks we grew up on." Another participant expressed how he views serving others with empathy, P1 stated "we're

not here to make your life harder. You got it hard enough you obviously left something worse than what we have to offer you here, which is nothing if you're here in an undocumented status. Then this is still obviously better than where you came from. So, let's not make that more difficult for you.”

P3 and P7 convey that law enforcement officers are here to help, and they are public servants who work for the people in the community. P4 describes what he believes is how most of the public feels, “how people that the police serve want us to provide them with a level of service that assures them that were going to do the right thing, we are going to come across as partners in the community, we’re going to allow people to be themselves, to tell their side of the story, and basically come across as partners in the community, as guardians.”

***Theme: Personal Growth***

While furthering education after high school or after a GED is not a requirement to become a law enforcement officer in North Carolina, it is influenced by leaders who participated in this study to continue to learn through education. P1 explains, “a big part of the problem in law enforcement, administrators and law enforcement officers in general, are grossly under educated as compared to the general population. As a result, when you have new ideas or theories come out, they don’t get it. They don’t want it because it’s change, and its change that they don’t understand.” Out of the 10 participants, seven had earned a master’s degree, one earned a bachelor’s degree, and 2 had some college courses.

Leading an agency requires the expansion of education for professional and personal growth. Each participant described attending some leadership training, from the FBI National Academy, Law Enforcement Leadership Academy (LELA), Leadership Excellence through Awareness and Practice (LEAP), West Point Leadership Program (WPLP), to all types of other management courses. Three of the participants mention attending the FBI National Academy (NA), a 10-week program that provides coursework to raise law enforcement standards, knowledge, and cooperation worldwide. Many leadership courses include different topics that focus on cultural awareness, diversity, and implicit bias.

Education in general, whether it's high school education, whether it's college education, whether it's graduate level education, they all teach you to think differently than the other. And when you learn to think differently than you're growing as a person and becoming more open and receptive (P1).

When leaders show an interest in continuing to learn personally, subordinates are motivated to start working on their education, such as P10 explains that continuing his education will help him with his goals, "I do have ideas and where I want to go with the rest of my career, what I want to implement, where I want to see changes."

***Broad Theme: Organizational Commitment***

The broad theme of organizational commitment was established from the police organizational culture, the agency's mission and vision statements, the recruitment, training, and development of officers to include officer wellness, the promotion of innovation, and how the CCPA framework applies to the agency.

Themes: Police Culture, Mission & Vision, Training, Innovation, and CCPA as shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6**

*Theme of Organizational Commitment for Cultural Responsiveness in Policing*



***Theme: Police Culture***

The police organizational culture theme included categories of police traditions, police family, and us versus them. Walker (2018) suggested that natural barriers to reform are “the norms of the traditional police culture, particularly the warrior mentality that has dominated American policing for decades” (p. 1796). P8 states, “be kind and polite to everyone you meet, but also have a plan to kill every one of them. I remember a version of this quote from years ago. We have always been told to have a warrior mindset and to treat every individual we interact with as an armed threat and every situation as a deadly force encounter, thus affecting the way that officers interact with the public. Over the years, as we embraced the community policing philosophy, I began to recognize my transition to the guardian concept.” P8 gives further details about the guardian concept and how it focuses on prioritizing service over crimefighting and valuing short conversations or interactions with community members as being fair, respectful, and considerate.

Some law enforcement traditions happen within the agency structure.

Traditionally most law enforcement agencies use the chain of command which is a series

of executive positions in order of authority that dictates who is in charge of who and of whom permission is asked, the leaders who were interviewed expressed having an open-door policy and one leader clarified how he has a sworn committee, who meets quarterly, “so members can bypass the whole chain of command and bring anything or everything to the table (P6).” Another participant (P9) describes having an action committee that the chief has set up for employees to provide input on certain things like uniforms, equipment, and vehicles. The committee’s report includes looking at current research that’s been done and using it to justify some of the recommendations they want to make.

Frequently the officer in the profession is more vilified than it deserves. P6 stated, “I’m not here to suggest that we as a law enforcement profession hasn’t created the problems that we have here today. We have but I think that within the profession, and you probably see this when you talk to other deputies and other officers, it becomes a us against them, kind of battle of trying to defend ourselves or trying to defend the profession. And we get lost in that debate, as opposed to trying to find meaningful ways of advancing the transparency and the PJ, all those pillars within the taskforce report.” Changing from the traditional warrior mindset to a guardian mindset could help improve the policing profession. P3 discussed “the only problem with creating a guardian concept is at some point enough is enough, ask, tell, make, has become beg, pled, and hope. Community policing can still involve the enforcing of laws.”

***Theme: Mission and Vision***

The theme mission and vision were developed from categories that included the mission and vision statements. Ideal influence is when officers actively participate in the

organization's planning and embrace the agency's mission and vision. Most of the participants had a mission statement, while only a few included a vision statement. Some of the agencies also posted their core values or pledge on their agency website. All the participants' mission statements reflected fairness and equality to everyone.

- P1: Service, and justice through equal treatment, we believe in the protection of life and property and the equal treatment of all persons. In the pursuit of justice, we strive to be fair, professional and possess the best technology and equipment available.
- P2: To enforce the law, prevent crime, maintain order, and protect the lives, property, and rights of all people. Professionalism, integrity, and respect are the principles that guide us while we make the town a safe and desirable place to live, work, and visit.
- P3: To provide the highest level of around-the-clock protection and service for the citizens. This will be accomplished through active patrolling, community-based policing, and professional investigating while interacting with respect and courtesy.
- P4: We promote a healthy, safe, well-educated, and thriving community with a sustainable quality of life. We provide effective and efficient government our citizens can trust. We deliver needed service through a responsive workforce committed to excellence, integrity, and teamwork.
- P5: Provide high quality services through the departments of Administration, Fire, Police, and Public Works.



- P6: Upholding the traditions of a noble profession, the department will positively impact our community by partnering with citizens and businesses to improve the quality of life and maintain a safe place to live, work, and visit.
- P7: To provide to the citizens a professional and well-trained staff to provide exceptional service and to protect the citizens and their property. We will enforce the laws fairly and without prejudice and will treat each person with respect and dignity in so far as they will allow. We will continually strive for excellence and will endeavor each day to build and improve community relations. Every person will be held to a high standard of honesty and integrity in both their professional and personal lives.
- P8: To provide efficient, high-quality services, encourage partnerships, and a proactively plan for the future to meet changing needs of the community.
- P9: To preserve and improve the quality of life, instill peace, and protect property through unwavering attention to our duties in partnership with the community.
- P10: In partnership with our community, we are committed to providing impartial, ethical, and professional law enforcement service and protection.

Values that impacted the community were integrity, and we believe our words and actions are guided by the rules and standards of our profession. Motivation, we believe in being enthusiastic and determined to achieve success. Professionalism, we believe in exhibiting the ethics, skills, and qualities which are inherent in our noble profession. Accountability, we believe in acknowledging and assuming responsibility for

our actions. Commitment, we believe in a sense of duty and responsibility. Trust, we believe honesty, fairness, and reliability will instill confidence and trust. One of the participant's pledges to their community was to provide the highest quality law enforcement and commitment to service, ensuring our community is policed by well-trained, ethically responsible police officers who will live up to the highest standards of professional policing.

***Theme: Training***

Leaders described in-service training experiences and additional training related to cultural competency, diversity, or crisis intervention training. This theme was an essential part of cultural competency as participants described the types of training agencies are implementing or encouraging their officers to become culturally competent and responsive to their community. While there has been yearly in-service training from the state-mandated training related to cultural competency and diversity, the critical focus was placed on additional training specific to the agency and the community they serve.

Some agencies bring in additional culturally diverse training. For example, P2 has had an individual from a deaf school speak to the officer about being a deaf or hard of hearing individual. P2 explained putting a notepad in the officer's hand and communicating with them in writing. P2 also has had people from Central Latino come and speak about why the Hispanic community is scared of the police. P5 conveys their agency's interest in additional training on mental health and de-escalation, which involves cultural differences.

Each participant recommended a community partnership training designed to train law enforcement and first responders who encounter individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis known as Crisis Intervention Training (CIT). The training is an extensive 40-hour curriculum that provides knowledge and skills needed to de-escalate persons in crisis who display signs of mental illness. P5 states that “CIT helps officers recognize when a person is having a mental crisis, and we can get them to an appropriate treatment or resources rather than jail.” P3 explains that CIT training has other benefits, such as building positive relationships within the community and safer interactions that help prevent unnecessary use of force incidents.

One participant explains a type of training that his agency participated in a few years ago. The group was called Dedication to Community out of Charlotte. The training was about teaching cops and the community how to engage with each other. They did a two-day training where members of the community were invited to come. Staff from the local university were also invited to attend. P1 explains how the training involved putting a 65-year-old African American male at a table with a 25-year-old White police officer, and they discussed policing in America. P1 states, “where else is this going to happen? It was neat to stand back in that room and look at those conversations at every table.” At another table, you would have a 40-year-old White officer and an 18-year-old African American male. This training helped both the officers and the members of the community understand each other’s perspectives.

Since the 70s, in President Nixon's Commission, one of the recommendations they made was to increase the education levels in law enforcement. P1 explains that the

commission wanted at least 90% of law enforcement officers to have a bachelor's degree. He states, “we barely broken 25% now, and then was Obama's commission rolls around, and it's almost an exact duplicate copy of Nixon's administrations. They told us that 20 years to 30 years ago, we didn't listen then so probably not going to listen now either.” Leaders believed education and additional training should be part of the career ladder for law enforcement officers. One of the participants (P4) explained how their career ladder included topics such as cultural awareness, diversity, and use of force issues where the officer gets points to move up the ladder, which helps develop a better officer and compensates them for the developmental work. P4 also believes education helps in law enforcement, “if you have an educated workforce that’s a workforce that’s going to be more adaptable to change, more approachable, and more affirmative to people. P8 also expressed that educated people are more open to change.

***Theme: Innovation***

Innovation and communication start with the leader, “if you have a narrow-minded tough guy police chief, you’ve got a narrow-minded tough police department (P4).” The organization the leader represents must be community-oriented and serve everyone. When an agency decides to implement innovative leadership, the chief or sheriff must value each senior leadership staff member’s different bits of intelligence to the organization. As the policing profession becomes a more knowledge-driven environment, the leader must redevelop the organization’s infrastructure and procedures so that there is time for growth. Three of the participants indicated that the agency’s policy and procedure restructure began when they started their positions as chiefs.

Many of the participants' innovative policies currently being discussed consist of topics on bias policing, fairness and equity, use of force, discriminatory stop-and-frisk, accountability, body cameras, no-knock warrants, and transparency. P5 gave feedback that the new policies on body cameras, he believes, "will assist the agency with transparency." As P2 explains, "we have come along way, but we have a long way to go. I don't know if I'll see that but if I keep pushing forward and the person after me keeps pushing forward, we're making progress."

***Theme: Cultural Competency for Public Agencies***

I began with a self-assessment tool (see Appendix A) established by Rice (2007). The goal of the self-assessment was to answer the questions to help identify CCPA, as described in chapter 3. Rice's (2007) 17 cultural competency public agency administrator questions corresponded with some interview questions. CCPA questions were not all addressed during each interview. The researcher discovered that most of the questions were answered without asking the complete list of questions.

I found that the leaders who took the time to complete and return the assessment strived for a culturally competent agency. The results of the self-assessment were established and showed the agencies who participated used CCPA for things most frequently (A = 103), things they occasionally do (B = 77), and things they rarely or never do (C = 50). The physical environment, materials, and resources (questions 1-4) were the least things the public agencies frequently did (C), except for printed information considering the average literacy levels of individuals and families. The communication styles (questions 5-9) were only used occasionally or rarely or never did

(B + C). The values and attitudes (questions 10-23) were the most frequently (A) used CCPA for all agencies. Questions 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 22 were answered with the agency doing these things frequently or occasionally (A + B). Every agency had at least one thing they did rarely or never (C).

Most police chiefs and leaders were aware of the gaps in service delivery for specific cultural groups. Not only did the results show their agency ways to address matters in CCPA, but their perceptions and experiences were described from detailed experiences in the interviews. Four questions were utilized to understand CCPA's theoretical framework developed by Rice (2010/2015b).

**CCPA Question 1.** How open is the organization to demographic and cultural diversity changes? The organization is open to demographic and cultural diversity changes within its communities. The participants who were agency leaders who completed both the assessment and the interview understood and respected the cultures of the citizens they serve. One example is serving citizens who do not speak English. Most law enforcement agencies have a translation service or someone who can communicate with someone who does not speak English. Some officers use Google Translate to communicate. This can become an unsafe situation for both the officer and the citizen, especially when the translator has a different dialect and can only assume what they are saying. Some agencies call someone from another department to assist if they speak the language of the person they are interacting with.

One of the agency leaders took the language barrier to a whole new level. As a new chief coming into a new community a few years ago, he realized there were many

different languages in the community he served and saw a flyer from his local YMCA that said, “peace on earth,” He immediately brought his community officer in and discussed finding out more information on this project. Without hesitation, the chief moved forward on the planting of the ‘peace pole.’ A Peace Pole is an internationally recognized symbol of the hopes and dreams of the entire human family, standing vigil in silent prayer for peace on earth. Each Peace Pole bears the message *May Peace Prevail on Earth* in different languages on its four or six sides. The town called in community members to represent each language displayed on the peace pole including English, Urdu, Spanish, German, Hindi, Vietnamese, Hmong, and American Sign Language. The chief said, “it has been a long time coming.”

**CCPA Question 2.** Does the organization have human resources or management training programs that include equitable delivery of programs and services to diverse communities? Agencies are beginning to use human resources to help them maintain equitable delivery of programs and services. The program and services provided to diverse communities by law enforcement agencies come from the town or the county resources. One agency is getting ready to go through the CALEA accreditation process, which is a way to improve the delivery of public safety services. Most of the agencies include equitable delivery through transparency of reports and policies.

**CCPA Question 3.** Do the tools used produce effective and acceptable community outcomes and public policy? The agency leader use outcomes to seek to improve the outcome through which policy is addressed. Agency policies are designed to create equitable and fair treatment of every individual they interact with. Officers are

required to read all policies and sign them stating they understand and follow them. All policies are reviewed regularly, and changes are made when best practices are updated and advanced.

**CCPA Question 4.** Are the perceptions about the organization's receptiveness to changes and outcomes a result of acquiring a diverse workforce? Acquiring a diverse workforce has been challenging for every law enforcement agency in the state. Not all cultures or minorities want to be an officer. Some agencies have been very aggressive in trying to diversify their departments. A few participants give examples of details about trying to acquire a diverse workforce. P9 explains how they know that their department needs to reflect the community, but you must also understand cultural competency. For us, it's not about if you are educated or if you are from a minority group. He states, "It's about the background of where you got that education, where you're from, it is all part of how we want to diversify our department. When you look at the military, their military experience, where they've been, how they've served, what exposure have they had, to different parts of the country, different parts of the world are all elements that I think play a role in making sure we have an organization of employees that can understand the importance of cultural competency." As a newer leader, P8 also discusses not having necessarily a diverse workforce in terms of race or cultural backgrounds. However, but he has "people of varying gender, age, religion, and sexual orientation that have been a positive result of his hiring process."

P2 discusses a part of the hiring process that he does a little differently. He states, "if you put in an application here to human resources, they come straight to me." If he



looks at it and is interested, he calls the candidate in for a one-on-one informal conversation to explain his background and what his agency represents, “then I determine if you fit not my agency, but in my community.” If you do, then he sends you through the rest of the standard hiring process. Another participant explains that the hiring process has not changed for them, but P1 states, “you have to hire for change, if you’re not hiring for values, you’re going to have a hard time convincing people to adopt and embrace the changes you want to make in law enforcement.”

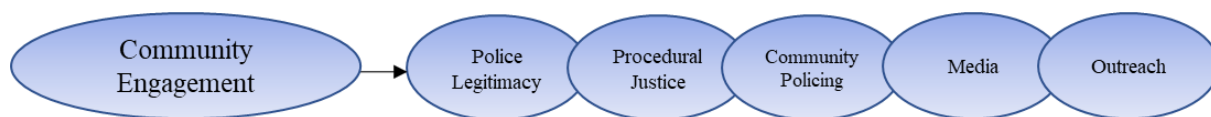
***Broad Theme: Community Engagement***

The broad theme of community engagement included categories from the collaboration with the citizens and police in the community to include fairness, justice, empowerment, participation, transparency, negative and positive outcomes through media, and outreach programs.

Themes: Police Legitimacy, Procedural Justice, Community Policing, Media, and Outreach are shown in Figure 7.

**Figure 7**

*Theme of Community Engagement for Cultural Responsiveness in Policing*



***Theme: Police Legitimacy***

This theme developed from several categories to include the public’s view of police, the community’s trust, and how to build relationships of trust. The number one issue in the police/citizen relationship was trust. Each participant said they had trust

within their community, but the national trust in police was a concern. P2 explains that it is not just the distrust of the police, but the distrust in government, because P1 says, “one of the most surprising things, you got to remember whom we were talking to, that even that demographic, trusted the police more than they trusted people four or five houses down the street from them.

Leaders expressed that the most significant concern stems from people of different cultures. Some cultures do not feel comfortable coming and talking to the police about issues they may be having trouble with. P3 uses an example of how the Hispanic community members felt like they were being singled out and did not come to the police. The issues grow and fester into resentment or hatred when it may be a fundamental misunderstanding that we could dispel face to face, but we are offering programs that some people will not even come to. P2 suggested, “if they can see us outside of an enforcement role, that’s going to help develop that trust.”

P3 explains that building relationships and trust is to treat everybody fairly. It does not matter whom you are talking to. “I encourage people to put themselves in their shoes and treat them how they would want to be treated. If you consider that person as a family member, which our community is like a family, then you're going to treat them a little bit better. Take a little bit of extra time and hopefully do your job (P3).” The values of a police department must include dignity and respect. P1 states, “dignity and respect these all 100% goes to police legitimacy and increasing levels of police legitimacy. The biggest role to play in promoting the importance of building those relationships begins with the organization’s leaders (P9). P1 explains how you want those relationships well

established and in place for when the nonsense does hit the fan. “Because you want to be able to call on your community, to quiet the community. You can’t wait until your officer involved shooting to ask for patience and trust from your citizens. You got to have that already (P1).”

***Theme: Procedural Justice***

Out of the 10 respondents, seven provided information about their awareness of PJ. As noted in the literature, PJ is critical to ensuring a leader’s agency is culturally responsive. PJ has four fundamental principles: fairness, transparency, voice, and impartiality which were the categories that created the theme of PJ. The following are the shared responses from the participants:

P1 said, discussing a new trainee who just got out of BLET, “I was riding around with him, and we were talking about just the nature of policing in America right now. I asked him, he's got kids, and one of them is driving now, I said, have you ever had a conversation with your son about how he's supposed to act? When he gets pulled over? He's like, No. You never thought about that, right? I said, ask an African American. Ask them if they've ever had to talk to their kids about how they act when they get pulled over. And every one of them will tell you, absolutely, yes. We've had many, many conversations about it. The question you should be asking me is why? Why did they have to have a conversation about that, but you don't. That's procedural justice.”

P2 said, “Being fair, transparent, and resolving disputes. I think you need to be fair on every aspect of any dispute. Whether it is a community dispute, a neighbor dispute, a dispute with your police department, a complaint that comes in.” P3

commented, “PJ begins from the interaction, enforcement, judgment, and no matter that person’s background, in the end, they should be treated the same no matter if they are a 60-year-old White man or an 18-year-old Black youth.” P4 stated, “I think in general all the people that we serve want us to provide them with a level of service that assures them that were going to do the right thing.” According to P6,

It's the process of exercising governmental powers in a way that is first understood that it is proportional, that it is based on law and that it is absent of any explicit or implicit bias on the part of the officer, or the agency.

P8 said,

PJ validates what most of us already know, how we treat people and how we talk to them does matter. It tells us how it works, why it works, and what we can expect in return. I believe if we treat people in a procedurally just way, they will trust us more.

P9 stated,

PJ as treating everyone with respect and dignity, giving people a voice allowing them to be heard in a very fair and impartial way and being transparent and what this process is. He gives an example of giving a person a ticket, and how he explains that there was a crash in the same area the other day that killed a little girl, so we’re trying to enforce and promote safety on our roads. It’s not good news to them, but if we talk to them in a fair, respectful way and explain why we stopped them, it allows people to see the inside of our thought process. To me, procedural justice really is about fairness and providing a voice and transparency.

PJ is essential for officers to be well trained in understanding how to exercise government powers. However, as P6 suggested, it could also be something as simple as having an interpreter who is competent enough to deal with a person who we are interviewing, having the proper documentation of encounters, following a statutory and case law for all cases, and being transparent in what we do. P6 explains that “those are the types of things that I think are important in terms of what would constitute PJ. Is it fair based on the circumstances at that time? Are we deploying our resources and staff based on objective needs or subjective needs? Are we over policing in one neighborhood as opposed to another? Do we overlook a violation in one community? Jaywalking, for example, kids playing basketball in the street, if it's a bunch of White kids in a rich neighborhood, we let that go. If it is, kids walking down the middle of the street in the African American community, are we treating them different?”

***Theme: Community Policing***

The theme of community policing comes from the relationships between the community and the police. Leaders who responded to this study were well informed of community policing. Experiences and perceptions were provided during the interview, and some information was listed on their agency websites. Leaders recognized that the police could not solve public safety issues alone. Building relationships and providing service to their community requires an interactive partnership. The relationship of the police to the community should be harmonious. The community relies on the police departments and sheriff's offices to protect and serve, while the police, in return, rely upon the community for support and cooperation. Although community policing has been

around for years, P1 expresses that nobody has done it right. P6 explains, “no amount of community policing is going to reduce crime when there is, in fact, crime and intimidation within the community.” Instead, P1 explains, “officers must understand what policing, not law enforcement, is because I think those two words are very, very different and we use them interchangeably, but they're very, very different. In my opinion, and you have officers that understand policing, and how important policing is, you got a much better officer than somebody that just wants to get out and write tickets and get misdemeanor drug arrests.”

Developing community policing programs include fostering and improving police/community relations and eliciting public support, identifying actual and potential community problems, concerns, and risks, initiating actions to solve identified problems, alleviate concerns, and reduce or remove risks, and forming a partnership with the community through the sharing of timely and relevant data. Influential community policing has a positive impact on reducing neighborhood crime, helping to reduce fear of crime, and enhancing the quality of life in the community. It accomplishes these things by combining the efforts and resources of the police, local government, and community members. P8 explains, “the partnership between these groups enhances public safety, awareness, and quality of life.”

The effort of community policing involves the police and the community working as partners to identify and prioritize crime and disorder problems. Both the community and police share the responsibility for developing and implementing proactive problem-solving strategies to address identified issues. P9s agency states; they strongly embrace

the philosophy of community policing in all its daily operations and functions.

Community Policing is based upon a partnership between the police and the community, whereby the police and the community share responsibility for identifying, reducing, eliminating, and preventing problems that impact community safety and order. By working together, the police and the community can reduce the fear and incidence of crime and improve the quality of life in neighborhoods citywide. One participant (P8) describes creating opportunities for educational exchanges such as citizens' police academies or regular neighborhood meetings or forums to discuss policies, tactics, or interests to the community.

One of the leaders (P2) explained how he created a new faith leader group that included the police department and the role of local church leaders. It began when the police were dealing with drug houses and nuisance houses, and they noticed that a church was within a five-minute walking distance. Police cannot help people with monetary concerns or even put them into treatment, but churches can. The participant shared how the group formed partnerships to deal with crises, battling homelessness, mental health, and even public transportation. The churches stepped up and took ownership of the area around them, even picking up the trash around them.

According to P2, "The partnership between the police department and the citizens are unique, and we will continue to build a strong foundation of police and community relations." P9 said they must make sure that they partner with communities that need their help, "not just need our help but partner with us, that relationship works both ways." According to P1, those relationships affect everything that we do as police officers. If you

have high social capital and high collective efficacy, you're going to see an increase in your police legitimacy. And if your police legitimacy goes up, it doesn't necessarily reduce crime, but it certainly helps you solve problems and take measures to prevent crime.

Nevertheless, one participant said that it takes every officer to do community policing. P1 uses an example of a conversation with one of his trainees.

I asked him, do you know what the number one thing that makes people angry with the police. It's not White cops shooting Black guys, that's not what this is. You speed past them on the road, when you're not going anywhere, you are riding by them and not wearing your seatbelt. That makes them angry more than anything else. So, the second thing that makes them angry and probably this is even more than the first but the first gets more attention a lot of times but the second is when you stop them and you're a jerk to them. Not whether you write them a ticket. The enforcement action has no bearing on how they view you after the stop.

***Theme: Media***

When asking the participants about community relations, media became one of the themes, especially social media. The media, including local newspapers, radio, and televisions stations, are an essential resource. We now live in a world where people want to know things right now during the actual moment. One participant (P1) explains how it is vital to have a good relationship with their local newspaper and reporters. When the department had negative information being rumored around the community, they could



contact their local news and respond. Another participant (P2) describes calling the media to respond to an article posted about the department. He explains how the media thrives off the narrative, but they must respond to squash potentially harmful rumors as a department.

Social media can be widely seen and shared. It can help or harm an agency or department. It can support the department through communication and engagement with the public, especially when agencies are attempting to reach culturally diverse groups. A participant explained contacting some Latino television stations such as Telemundo and Univision to help reach audiences that would not normally attend an event, such as a town hall, in hopes they would feel more comfortable with attending. P10 says, “a solid social media presence helps agencies stay interactive with the community.” It can also get the department or officers into sticky situations. P10 also explains that the potential for good can backfire. P7 uses an example, “we had a missing person, and I begged the family not to mention it on social media. The reason I've done that was because I knew the minute they did, we would be flooded with stuff.” Flooding the department with calls ties up more officers than it should and can hurt the investigation.

Participant P8 explains that creating and maintaining an effective social media policy can help ensure that it helps the agency instead of harming it, even though social media can be an ordeal to maintain and as much as some agencies do not like it when bad things happen. P1 explains, “It's really helped, helping hold us more accountable. And because we're putting our actions so much more in the face of the public and you don't

have to wait for the six o'clock news to find out that a police officer in Minnesota killed somebody. It's instantaneous right now. And so, it's forcing us to be better.”

***Theme: Outreach***

The theme was developed from leaders describing how they reached out to their community during events. The participants discussed the importance of ensuring each participatory effort had real potential to make a difference and that their agency was aware of the potential. I observed a feeling of pride when I asked about outreach programs, and ideas were predominant as they were eager to talk about it. Officers and administrators are out there at community events, whether formal or informal, to help build relationships in diverse communities.

Many agencies participate in formal events that are largely promoted across the state, such as National Night Out. National night out is a national community building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships. The participants explained the following events:

P1 describes an event called Cops and Bobbers. A new park was bought a few years ago, and a fishing pier was built. The event was designed for kids to come and fish with police officers to build those relationship or even start relationships. The event brought in around 150 kids throughout the entire day. Every one of the kids caught at least one fish, and some of them caught a whole lot of fish, and they received a brand-new fishing pole, rod reel, and a little tackle box with hooks, lures, and weights. Most of them had never caught fish before in their life or never fished before. The officer helped them bait the hook, cast for them, reel for them, or help them take the fish off the hook.

The event reached kids, which is essential. P1 states, “If you get the kids wanting to do something, then you're going to get the parents and then when they see the officer and the kid engaging at that level. That releases some fear from the parents. But it also is teaching the kids very valuable lessons in their relationships with law enforcement and changing those perceptions that they may be getting at home or in school.”

P2 describes an event called senior day out. The event feeds the senior citizens in the community. The town and the churches pitch in and have things like spaghetti and grilled hot dogs. P7 explains an elder care program that has a list of seniors that they contact every day, and if they do not get a hold of them, they send a deputy out there to check on them. P5 also has a program called senior reassurance that is for the elderly and anyone in the community in ill health. Furthermore, P2 also started having little training sessions that explain why an officer may be sitting on the side of the road, why you see some of the officers in a convenience store at two in the morning, why you have a time frame to get your license plate if you move from another state.

Some agencies have citizen academies that help teach the community. P3 describes an academy where the general population is educated on many different aspects of law enforcement, including the day-to-day operations, constitutional law, and criminal law, use of force, and guiding principles of law enforcement. These programs are held once a year and include the opportunity for the citizen to ride along with the officer and participate in simulated weapons training. Citizen Academy also gives the community time to offer comments, ideas, and solutions.

Sometimes community events, or times that the agency gets involved during events, such as passing out Halloween candy, the community can think it is excellent and positive or think it is a waste of taxpayers' money (P7). Explaining that agencies do some events through donations and not taxpayer money is helpful. Occasionally the agency is not even aware of some things that may be going on, as P9 describes seeing it on Twitter where the captain attended a barbecue of a family who just happened to invite an officer, the officer invited a captain. Then, next thing you know, you have officers having informal, organic conversations with people in the community, leading by example.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain the perspective and experience of law enforcement leaders who implement and influence culturally responsive practices. When discussing diversity, especially in one particular state, it is interesting how policing can be very different among law enforcement agencies. However, leaders who cultivate a culturally responsive practice face the same successes and challenges, whether near the coast, at the state's center, or near the mountains. Just like the obstacles for diverse communities, so are the hurdles for an agency trying to provide public service.

Chapter 4 explains the research setting, demographics, data collection and analysis, and trustworthiness of evidence. The primary research questions: What are the lived experiences of police leaders who have implemented culturally responsive practices? The participants' overall perception was that the leader, the agency, and the community must join and communicate to implement culturally responsive practices. How do police leaders influence cultural responsiveness in their agency? The leader's

justification of influence for their agency exhibits an ethic of care, develops cultural awareness in the agency and community, demonstrates and promotes inclusive practices, and challenges policies and procedures to meet the needs of diverse police and citizens.

Chapter 5 will include a more in-depth interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusion. Recommendations for future research studies regarding cultural competency and responsiveness in policing will also be included.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the lived experiences and gain the perspectives of law enforcement leaders regarding culturally competent service delivery within their agencies and communities. The primary research questions for this qualitative study were the following:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of police leaders who have implemented culturally responsive practices?

RQ2: How do police leaders influence cultural responsiveness in their agency?

The study revealed the benefits and challenges of cultural responsiveness for police agencies. The results of the study showed that leaders in law enforcement agencies continue to improve, implement, and influence culturally responsive practices regardless of the recent defund police movement or the pandemic.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The interpretations of findings are based on the research participants experience as leaders and public administrators in their agency. The interpretations represent the data collected from the lived experiences of the participants and the literature that was presented in Chapter 2.

#### **Research Question 1**

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of police leaders who have implemented culturally responsive practices?

The findings revealed that leaders who have implemented practices to include cultural competency, diversity, and PJ have a strong relationship built with the community they serve. Participants who possessed the leadership skills and were open to change understand the importance of providing a service that respects everyone no matter their age, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, education level, or annual income, while maintaining public safety.

### **Research Question 2**

RQ2: How do police leaders influence cultural responsiveness in their agency?

The findings revealed that it takes a police leader with accountability, empathy, integrity, interpersonal communication, and cultural awareness skills to create a culturally competent public agency. A leader who influences culturally responsive practices amongst their subordinates must have a high level of competence and a high level of trust to achieve high levels of influence. Participants described how they follow a traditional chain of command but allow their employees to have a voice with open door opportunities.

The findings are consistent with the findings of my literature review and the theoretical framework for the study, which was based on Rice's (2010/2015b) theory on culturally competent public agencies. According to CCPA as examined by Rice (2010/2015b), cultural proficiency arrives when the organization, its professionals, and involved staff understand and effectively respond to challenges and opportunities surrounding sociocultural diversity in a social system. Eight key areas were recognized in CCPA: (a) administration, (b) mission and governance, (c) organizational culture, (d)

effective communications, (e) personnel practices and staffing patterns, (f) service delivery, (g) policy and decision-making, and (h) outreach and marketing approaches as shown in Figure 1.

The key areas of CCPA begins with administration insisting that a policing leader have diversity management knowledge and skills, that leadership positions are to be held responsible for support and guidance to all staff in implementing the mission statement and goals relative to cultural competency, and that leaders exhibit knowledge of the demographic data relating to cultural diversity in the community. In this study, the mission and governance section showed that while cultural diversity was not reflected in all members of an agency, the agencies are attempting to acquire a diverse workforce. Some participants explained that a diverse workforce does not necessarily only mean race. Workforce diversity means having similarities and differences among employees in terms of many factors such as, age, cultural background, physical abilities or disabilities, religion, gender, and sexual orientation. The agency leaders explained that all members of the workforce receive ongoing diversity training and inspire other ways to improve training.

Cultural competency in public agency organizational culture revealed that agencies have a respect for the rights of all individuals' cultural customs, beliefs, and practices. Agencies recognize, incorporate, and are open to and accepting of cultural difference. The effective communication area of CCPA described some of the barriers in communication with culturally diverse people and in what manner media is used. Agencies use interpretation and translation services when appropriate, but most agencies



do not reflect all languages in text, illustrations, or resource materials. Cultural competency in public agency personnel practice and staffing patterns revealed agency leaders attempt to recruit culturally diverse staff. Participants reported not using a culturally competent assessment during recruitment, but they do have an interest in using it towards current staff and in the future for recruitment. Diversity training is used as part of the yearly in-service provided by the states mandated continuing education for law enforcement. Some agencies seek further training in addition to what the state provides but would like to see additional aspects or scenarios used for the yearly in-service training.

Cultural competency in public agency service delivery showed that agency leaders understand the barriers that prevent culturally diverse people from contacting the police and that they use outreach strategies to try to reach some of the culturally diverse individuals. Participants described their responsibility to reach out to culturally diverse individuals to build relationships. Cultural competency in public agency policy and decision-making was shown as participants acknowledged input from all staff in decision making. Although cultural competency is not incorporated into all policies, participants gave insight into the policies that do incorporate the topic. Some agencies do not have the allocation of adequate resources to implement cultural competency into policy, but a few agencies do consult with other agencies and sometimes with citizen groups in the community before finalizing policies that may be culturally impacted.

Cultural competency in public agency outreach and marketing approaches confirms the acknowledgement of cultural diversity in the community. Participants

showed consultation with different cultural leaders in their experience as part of community networking. Participant policing leaders established their understanding and respect for the roles and public service they provide for the community. According to Rice and Matthews (2014), a culturally competent model and culturally proficient agency begins with cultural awareness and cultural knowledge about diverse groups and transforms that awareness and knowledge into specific skills, practices standards, and policies. In the eight key areas recognized in CCPA, this study revealed ways that policing agencies exhibit being culturally proficient, which in turn has increased the quality and effectiveness of the public agency services.

According to Walters and Bolger (2019), PJ is perceived to predict citizens' compliance with the law, and their legitimacy beliefs regarding law enforcement are instrumental in promoting compliance from citizens. Although this study did not evaluate PJ, the leader perceptions of both PJ and police legitimacy were discussed and recognized by participants. Gould (2017) suggested that leaders in policing should ask themselves, how do you build relationships in the community and within your agency? And have you heard of PJ or police legitimacy? This study indicated seven of the 10 participants were aware of the terminology and meaning of PJ. Those leaders explained their belief that police legitimacy is strengthened by an officer's ability to provide PJ. The ability of an officer to treat people in a procedurally fair and just way consist of being respectful and treating them fairly, providing neutral decisions transparently, letting them have the chance to tell their side of the story, and having trustworthy motives that are sincere and authentic.

According to Li et al. (2021), police created an image of themselves as warriors prepared to use force against a dangerous population rather than guardians of their own communities. The findings of this study showed leaders who implement culturally responsive practices in policing create and desire a guardian mindset or servant mindset rather than the traditional view of police work having a militarizing policing or warrior mindset. Participants want to defend, protect, and be keepers of their communities.

From the literature, history has shown us that the modern law enforcement profession has emerged as a response to disorder. This study began before the recent events in America, but the data collection was conducted 18 months after the Covid 19 pandemic began and the death of George Floyd. However, participants explained their outreach community efforts prior to those events and their desire to stay focused on serving their diverse communities.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study provided valuable in-depth information describing the lived experiences of law enforcement leaders who implement and influence culturally responsive practices for their diverse communities. Limitations are derived from the reality that the study used a qualitative research design. However, using a qualitative method allowed for a more personalized perspective of the lived experiences compared to what a quantitative method would have provided. The data collection process posed a limitation in the study because leaders in policing may have chosen not to participate in this study due to the nature of the phenomenon and fear associated with retaliation. However, participants who responded to the invitational email exhibited enthusiasm

towards the topic of this phenomenon and indicated no fear of participation. The limitation was accounted for by the inclusion of coding variables with the exclusion of identifying variables. Participant's anonymity was protected throughout the results section of this study.

Another limitation discussed in this study was my ability to bracket my personal past knowledge and all other theoretical knowledge to give full attention to the phenomenon. I kept a reflective journal to review my role as an interviewer which was difficult to approach confidently. Although it was difficult, I used my feelings, thoughts, and aspirations to write my final version of the methodology. This relates back to the importance of creating transparency in the research process as discussed earlier in the paper. The limitation of police agencies having different perceptions was addressed during the results section. Not every law enforcement agency has the same perceptions, but they serve different types of communities. However, when addressing the concerns of cultural competency and responsiveness in policing, leaders aimed to accomplish the same goal of respecting and serving their diverse communities.

### **Recommendations**

The purpose of this research study was to explore the experiences, perceptions, and beliefs of law enforcement leaders, particularly for understanding how they implement and influence cultural competency in their agency to serve the diverse communities. The research findings of the current study describe how a leader, the agency, and the community must collaborate to create a culturally responsive policing

service agency. In most cases, the aspirations that the policing leader have for themselves also reflects their agency's mission and expectations of employees.

The review of literature for this study revealed that limited research has been conducted on law enforcement leaders' perception, experiences, and influence they have on a culturally responsive police agency. The research that has been conducted in this qualitative phenomenological research study addressed the leader's perception of their agency and community. The use of a mixed method study is recommended and has the potential to result in comprehensive data that may determine the cause-and-effect relationship between specific leadership styles implemented by leaders and the agency outcomes for the communities they serve. Understanding the community's response to the agency leader that is seeking to be culturally responsive would entail a deeper understanding and produce effective communication for both the agency and the community they serve.

Leaders consider revisiting and reassessing the predominant mindset of the law enforcement profession and change the police cultures to reflect the values and expectations of the communities they serve. A recommendation for future research would be to use focus groups to dive deeper into conversations between community members and leaders within one community to assess whether the law enforcement agency is reflecting their communities' values. Results could improve on the guardian mindset rather than the warrior mindset and begin to change the police culture.

Finally, cultural factors of the community, or service community, were not addressed in this study. Future studies among specific races, sexual orientation, or other

cultural backgrounds may increase the understanding of how agencies and communities can build relationships, thus officers may have a better understanding of becoming culturally responsive. Additionally, research relating to specific geographic areas, such as suburban, rural, or urban may produce interesting findings based on the differences in diverse settings.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The impact on social change resulting from this study are multifaceted across several levels. This study was intended to help police agencies make progress towards becoming culturally responsive when they interact with the public. Like any other skill required in policing, this skill is something that involves the commitment of not only the officer, but the organization and the community, and especially the leaders who promotes policy and procedures and guide the mindset of the officers. The levels include individual, organizational, and societal. These three levels work together to create positive social change between the law enforcement profession and the communities they serve.

On an individual level, each of the participants is working to improve cultural responsiveness for their agency. The individual improves their cultural competency by improving their cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, and cultural skills. Along with the increase in personal awareness, knowledge, and skills, the individual must be open to changing policies and procedures for responding to issues related to diversity in the policing profession. By improving these aspects for their personal growth, the individual

leaders then influence and guide other law enforcement officers to becoming more aware and more educated.

On the organizational level, the organization is made up of individuals. If these individuals are mentored and influenced by the culturally competent leader, then this will result in a culturally competent public agency (CCPA) or a culturally competent policing organization. An organization filled with culturally competent officers could potentially lead from the warrior mindset into the new guardian mindset. With the new mindset combined with officer who possess cultural responsiveness, this will stimulate positive social change.

On the societal level, society is made up of individuals and organizations. Therefore, both the individual and the organizations must be equal in responsibility and accountability to cultivate a thriving society. To maintain this thriving society, all law enforcement organizations must unify and continue to develop and build respectful relationships with the individuals they serve. The unity of organizations and individuals could impact the policing profession by potentially increasing legitimacy and improving social capital, thus, positive social change.

### **Conclusion**

This qualitative study captured the lived experiences of law enforcement leaders regarding their community and how they are culturally responsive in North Carolina. The structures of experiences were based on individual attributes such as skills, values, behaviors, attitudes, and barriers based on Rice's (2010/2015b) CCPA works. In

conclusion, based on the study findings, the central structure of experiences that prevailed throughout this study is Service, service to the community and service to the agency.

The interpretative phenomenological analysis of this research allowed for in-depth responses from a specific population. The three board themes that emerged included: visionary professional practice, organizational commitment, and community engagement. These themes could serve as additional suggested research for future mixed studies, as well as inform law enforcement professionals ways to improve resources needed for servicing diverse populations. Future research can include a mixed methods approach or the use of focus groups to understand the relationship between the agency and the community they serve. The implications for positive social change include the individual, the organizations, and society.

This research highlights a topic that has developed into a crucial issue in policing. Ideally, this research will begin to fill the gap in research on diversity, cultural competency, implicit bias training, and policy changes for law enforcement agencies. This current research study will help provide avenues for social change and develop ways in which support can be employed to serve the diverse population of America, which can have a strong impact on every neighborhood in society.



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## Appendix A: Cultural Competence Public Agency Self-Assessment

The self-assessment instrument can assist public agencies in identifying areas in which they might improve the quality of their programs and services to culturally diverse populations.

### **Self-Assessment Checklist for Personnel Providing Public Agency Programs and Services---Please enter A, B or C for each item listed below.**

**A** = Things my public agency does frequently; **B** = Things my public agency does occasionally; **C** = Things my public agency rarely or never does

#### **Physical Environment, Materials & Resources**

- \_\_\_1. The agency displays pictures, posters, artwork, and other decor that reflect the cultures and ethnic backgrounds of clients served by the agency.
- \_\_\_2. The agency displays magazines, brochures, and other printed materials in reception areas that are of interest to and reflect the different clients served by the agency.
- \_\_\_3. When using videos, films or other media resources for health education, treatment or other interventions, my agency ensures that they reflect the cultures and ethnic background of individuals and families served by the agency.
- \_\_\_4. The agency ensures that printed information disseminated takes into account the average literacy levels of individuals and families receiving services.

#### **Communication Styles**

When interacting with individuals and families who have English proficiency:

\_\_\_5. The agency uses bilingual-bicultural staff and/or personnel and volunteers skilled or certified in the provision of medical interpretation treatment, interventions, meetings, or other events for individuals and families who need or prefer this level of assistance.

\_\_\_6. For individuals and families who speak languages or other than English, program and service staff in the agency attempt to learn and use key words in their language so that they are better able to communicate with them during assessment, treatment or other interventions.

\_\_\_7. Program and service staff attempts to determine any familial colloquialisms used by individuals or families that may impact on assessment, treatment, or other interventions.

\_\_\_8. When possible, the agency ensures that all notices and communications to individuals and families are written in their language of origin.

\_\_\_9. The agency understands that it may be necessary to use alternatives to write communications for some individuals and families, as word of mouth may be a preferred method of receiving information.

### **Values & Attitudes**

\_\_\_10. The agency avoids imposing values that may conflict or be inconsistent with those of cultures or ethnic groups served by the agency.

\_\_\_11. The agency screens books, movies, and other media resources for cultural, ethnic or racial stereotypes before sharing them with individuals and families served by the program or agency.

\_\_\_12. The agency intervenes in an appropriate manner when it is observed by other staff or clients within a program engaging in behaviors that show cultural insensitivity, racial biases, or prejudice.

\_\_\_13. The agency recognizes and accepts that individuals from diverse backgrounds may desire varying degrees of acculturation into the dominant culture.

\_\_\_14. The agency understands and accepts that family is defined by different cultures (e.g., extended family members, fictive kin, godparents).

\_\_\_15. The agency accepts and respects that male-female roles may vary among different cultures and ethnic groups (e.g., who makes major decisions for the family).

\_\_\_16. The agency understands that age and life-cycle factors must be in interactions with individuals and families (e.g., high value placed on the decision of elders, the role of eldest male or female in families, or roles and expectation of children within the family).

\_\_\_17. Even though staff's professional or moral viewpoints may differ, the agency accepts individuals and families as the ultimate decision makers for services and supports impacting their lives.

\_\_\_18. The agency recognizes that the meaning or value of services and treatment and programs may vary greatly among cultures.

\_\_\_19. The agency accepts that religion and other beliefs may influence how individuals and families respond to services, programs and treatments.

\_\_\_20. The agency seeks information from individuals, families or other key informants that will assist in service adaptation to respond to the needs and preferences of culturally and ethnically diverse served by my program or agency.



\_\_\_21. Before visiting or providing services in the home setting, the agency provides information on acceptable behaviors, courtesies; customs and that are unique to the culturally and ethnically diverse groups by my program or agency.

\_\_\_22. The agency keeps abreast of the major concerns and issues for ethnically and racially diverse client populations residing in the geographic locale served by the program or agency

\_\_\_23. The agency promotes and advocates for the review of its programs and/or its agency's mission statement, goals, policies, and procedures to ensure that they incorporate principles and practices that promote cultural and linguistic competence.

#### **How to use this self-assessment instrument**

This instrument is intended to heighten the awareness and sensitivity of executives and personnel to the importance of cultural and linguistic competence in public service delivery settings. It provides statements that reflect the kinds of beliefs, attitudes, values, and practices that foster cultural and linguistic competence at the individual or practitioner level. While there are no correct responses, frequent "C" responses may indicate that you do not necessarily demonstrate beliefs, attitudes, values, and practices that promote cultural and linguistic competence in public service delivery programs.

Source: Derived from Goode & Fisher, (2012).

## Appendix B: Public Agency Questions on Cultural Competency

(For Agency Administrators and Service Delivery Personnel)

1. When you hear the term “cultural competence” what comes to mind?
2. What are the most challenging aspects of providing agency services and programs to multi-ethnic/multi-cultural clients?
3. What are the major organizational obstacles (policies, organizational characteristics, etc.) inhibiting ethnic and cultural understanding among staff, clients, and service provider personnel?
4. What issues have arisen (need for resources, conflict, etc.) as your agency attempts to meet the needs relating to ethnic and cultural diversity clientele?
5. What mechanisms, if any, are in place that promotes communication among different levels and departments within the public agency relating to cultural competency initiatives and efforts?
6. What has the agency done to provide the best service for the multi-ethnic and cultural population (e.g., educating providers in regard to different ethnic/cultural beliefs and client practices; use of specific services—interpreters, community liaisons, etc.)?
7. In what ways has the agency addressed the ethnic and cultural needs of clients as they receive agency services and programs?
8. What services and programs are available to agency staff regarding ethnic/cultural-related issues?

9. In what ways are agency providers trained and helped to deal with ethnic and cultural issues (e.g., trained to recognize diseases common in certain populations, mechanisms, and protocols by which providers can request assistance in dealing with ethnic/cultural issues and needs)?
10. What relationships does the agency have with particular community groups and how have these relationships affected the ethnic/cultural competency efforts of the agency (community businesses under contract, initiatives with neighborhood centers, etc.)?
11. What community outreach actions have been taken by the agency (e.g., health education programs, materials and forums for various ethnic/cultural groups, community support for clients of various ethnic/cultural backgrounds)?
12. In what ways are ethnic and cultural differences recognized throughout the agency (e.g., celebration of certain days, community events and programs)?
13. What, if any, ethnic/cultural professional programs can be developed and/or instituted at the agency to attract culturally competent staff and service and program professionals? Are internships targeted toward ethnic professionals? Mentoring programs? What are the challenges in developing and delivering these programs?
14. What government guidelines or regulations guide or influence the agency services, programs and initiatives regarding ethnic/cultural diversity and cultural competence?

15. What are the greatest strengths and the biggest concerns of the agency in regard to the delivery of services and programs and interactions with the multi-ethnic/cultural populations of its community?
16. What have you seen, or would you like to see in terms of actual effects of ethnic/cultural initiatives on the work environment and on client services and programs in the agency?
17. What are your concerns about any of the ethnic/cultural activities undertaken by your agency?

Source: Derived from Rice, (2007).