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Motivators, Barriers, and Facilitators for Hispanic Females to Become Police Officers

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Walden University

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Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

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Reynaldo Caban

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Motivators, Barriers, and Facilitators for Hispanic Females to Become Police Officers

by

Reynaldo Caban

MPhil, Walden University, 2021

MA, Concordia University, 2019

BA, Minnesota State University, 2008

Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

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November 2022

Abstract

The loss of public trust in police institutions across the United States has increased and continues to grow as negative police interactions are broadcast on the news and social media outlets. Fueling the problem are police departments that are not representative of the communities they serve. Marginalized individuals are less likely to be heard by representatives of police departments, yet these individuals are needed to change negative perceptions. Hispanic females were selected for this study as part of those marginalized individuals. A generic qualitative approach was used to build this research with representative bureaucracy theory as the theoretical framework to better understand the relationship between police departments and Hispanic females. This study investigated the motivators, barriers, and facilitators for 15 Hispanic females to become police officers. Aggregate data of all participants were holistically coded and themes developed. This study found that adequate pay, positive police contact, serving a purpose, appropriate guidance, negative police contact, job market saturation, criminal background, higher level of education, and appropriate support were significant factors for Hispanic females to become police officers. Policy makers who are better informed regarding the attitudes of Hispanic females toward law enforcement can develop more equitable policies. Lasting positive social change could be achieved when equitable policies are created that increase public trust and strengthen the working relationship between the police and traditionally marginalized communities while increasing public safety and decreasing the number of people hurt during police encounters.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my loving daughters, Fern and Rosemary. I believe in them and know that they will undoubtedly overcome all challenges that stand in the way of achieving their dreams. This study was fueled by the hope that the findings allow more Hispanic females to enter law enforcement and create positive social change.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I must acknowledge my dissertation committee. The leadership and guidance provided by Dr. Knight and Dr. Ferreros were instrumental in completing this dissertation. I must acknowledge Dr. Knight and the time he spent guiding me during the dissertation process. To my daughters: watching you grow and being part of your journey in this world kept me pushing forward to attempt to create a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive world for you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

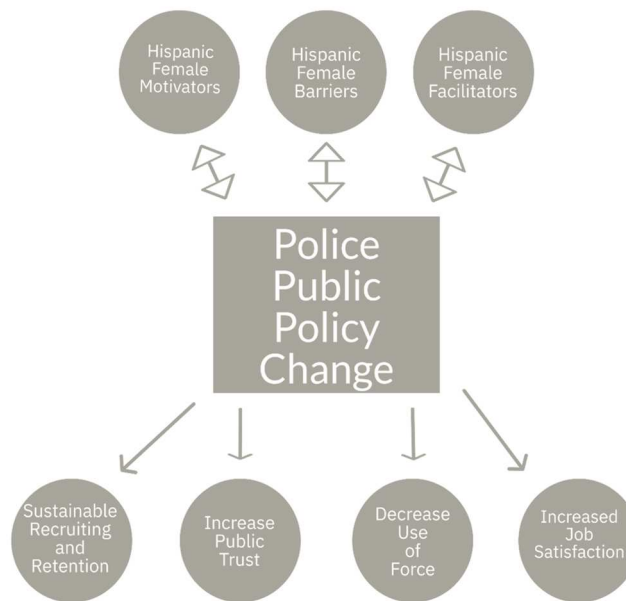
Recruiting and retention of police officers has been a challenge for law enforcement agencies across the United States for over a decade. Notably, difficulties in recruiting and retention have been associated with the recent deaths of several unarmed Black men (Linos, 2018; Morrow et al., 2021). Recruiting traditional police candidates is problematic, and simply employing these individuals does not equate to a diverse pool of hired applicants. Although police organizations may seek to employ a more diverse force, minority status candidates are driven further from police work due to the working relationship between the police and communities of color (Miles-Johnson & Pickering, 2018).

There are many suppositions regarding why recruitment and retention are decreasing in police departments across the United States. Some researchers note this is due to a lack of younger individuals choosing to be part of public service (Perry & Wise, 1990). Others argue that police departments are not effectively targeting the right candidates or should change the way they hire (Fischer, 2021; Huey et al., 2018; Linos, 2018). The purpose of this study, however, was not to prove or disprove these assumptions regarding what factors are reducing police recruitment or retention or what efforts can increase it. Obtaining the perspectives of individuals who police departments seek to employ as officers can provide policy makers with the best information regarding what needs to be changed to improve retention and recruiting. Instead of making assumptions regarding what individuals believe concerning law enforcement or how to better build relationships, in this study, I sought to provide a better understanding of the

motivations, barriers, and facilitators for someone to become a police officer. To make this study significant to police force diversity, I specifically explored these areas as they concerned Hispanic female officers. Figure 1 provides areas of positive social change that can be achieved from the data obtained in this study.

Figure 1

Police Public Policy Change



Research Literature Deficiency

There is a wealth of information in law enforcement research literature. This includes data concerning police tactics and the use of force, body cameras, and recruitment and retention (Aiello, 2018; Newton, 2018; Rinehart Kochel & Gau, 2021; St. Louis et al., 2019). However, the literature is primarily focused on topics concerning law enforcement in general, communities policed, and other issues that simultaneously affect several agencies.

The research literature provides a close look at retention and recruitment to indicate why these areas are decreasing for law enforcement officers. Studies have supplied data that suggests unequal recruitment tactics and a loss of public trust are reasons why recruitment and retention are failing (Linos, 2018; Linos & Riesch, 2020; Miles-Johnson & Pickering, 2018). Attempts to increase retention and recruitment have recently focused on balancing the female-to-male ratio of police officers (Lyles, 2020). However, researchers have yet to thoroughly explore what minority status applicants need to be successfully recruited and retained as law enforcement officers.

Because of the lack of research literature focused on the specific ethnic composition of police recruits and who is retained, in this study, I explored the motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers. Although I sought information to help increase the recruitment and retention of Hispanic females in law enforcement, I did not focus on the general recruitment and retention of police officers. In this study, I aimed to provide a better understanding of the lived experiences of Hispanic females as they enter and remain in law enforcement positions. Specifically, I attempted to fill the gap in the literature concerning motivators, barriers, and facilitators of Hispanic females to become police officers. This data may be used in assisting with recruitment and retention, advertising, job satisfaction, and other applications that could result in a more diverse police force.

Research Problem

Police agencies across the state of Minnesota face difficulties recruiting Hispanic female police officers. Recruitment of these officers has significantly decreased after the

Ferguson, Missouri, police shooting of an unarmed Black man (Linos, 2018; Morrow et al., 2021). Researchers have not identified the motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers (Gibbs, 2019). This problem impacts Hispanic female recruitment as police agencies may not hire them at the same rate as White females (Linos, 2018). The lack of minority recruitment, however, has been linked to decreased public trust and organizational legitimacy (Miles-Johnson & Pickering, 2018).

The research literature reviewed for this study indicated others had examined the difficulties of Hispanic female police officer recruitment by focusing on increasing positive community relations, nontraditional police educational backgrounds, and simplifying hiring processes (Fischer, 2021; Huey et al., 2018; Linos & Riesch, 2020). None of the literature reviewed for this study examined this problem from the perspective of Hispanic females as well as the policies that directly influenced them. Motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers are, therefore, not known. My study filled this gap by exploring Hispanic females' lived experiences during their recruitment process in the state of Minnesota. I also made inquiries concerning the retention of Hispanic females employed as police officers by examining the same motivators, barriers, and facilitators. The findings of this study demonstrated that passive representation is being achieved, but active representation has not taken place in Hispanic females' attitudes concerning law enforcement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers in Minnesota by interviewing Hispanic females in law enforcement. The research paradigm concerns the experiences of Hispanic females who are not properly recruited or retained in law enforcement. In this study, I obtained data regarding the reasons Hispanic females are not recruited and retained based on their perspectives and lived experiences (Haigh & Withell, 2020). I explored the lived experiences of Hispanic females as they entered, remained, or left law enforcement. The data obtained was descriptive. The phenomenon of interest was how the lived experiences of Hispanic females affected their perception of police, which impacts how they are recruited and retained.

Data has shown that female police officers, when present on the scene, significantly reduce the use of force and level of injury toward the suspect (Hoffman & Hickey, 2005). Furthermore, having minority status individuals in law enforcement who are representative of the community they serve increases public trust. Therefore, in this study, I explored whether passive or active representation of Hispanic females made a perceived difference in their motivators, barriers, and facilitators to becoming police officers (Mosher, 1982). The information collected in this study can better inform public policy makers regarding the perceptions of Hispanic females and what can be done to implement proper policies.

Research Questions

The following research questions (RQs) guided this study:

RQ1: What are the motivators for Hispanic females to become police officers in the state of Minnesota?

RQ2: What are the barriers for Hispanic females to become police officers in the state of Minnesota?

RQ3: What are the facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers in the state of Minnesota?

The subjects of this research (motivators, facilitators, and barriers) were separated and formed the three primary RQs. By developing separate RQs for each area explored, the data were grouped accordingly. The participants were asked interview questions based on the RQs in sequential order; however, they were not discouraged or stopped from adding information applying to a previous question.

Theoretical Framework

Mosher's (1982) representative bureaucracy theory was used as the theoretical framework for this study. The major theoretical propositions in representative bureaucracy are passive representation and active representation. The representative bureaucracy theory directly aligns with this study as I explored how Hispanic females' views and lived experiences were affected based on both passive and active representation. Representative bureaucracy theory has been established as a public policy and administrative theoretical framework, which further aligns this research with public policy and administration.

Representative bureaucracy theory addresses passive and active representation (Mosher, 1982). The focus of passive representation is the number of employees in the

bureaucracy, which could be representative of the community or be higher than what makes up its racial composition. Active representation begins when changes to policies made for the benefit of the organization are directly affected by those passively represented. Passive and active representation play a crucial role in representative bureaucracy (Akram, 2018; Bradbury & Kellough, 2011; Chanin & Rojo- Choi et al., 2018; Mendoza, 2020; Mosher, 1982).

In this study, I collected data to better understand the experiences of Hispanic females as they transition to law enforcement officers by exploring their daily life experiences using a generic qualitative design. Representative bureaucracy theory was appropriate for this study as it provided a theoretical perspective of a bureaucratic organization, such as a police department (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011). Representative bureaucracy theory was used to view motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers from the lens of passive and active representation (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011; Mosher, 1982). The interview questions (see Appendix A) in this study were developed using this lens and explored if unconscious bias played a role in the participants' lived experiences (Akram, 2018).

Nature of the Study

This study utilized a generic qualitative design to explore how Hispanic females (a) understand their experiences, (b) construct their environments, and (c) interpret their lived experiences regarding becoming police officers (Merriam, 2009). Specifically, this study was designed to obtain descriptive data from the participants through semistructured personal interviews. This approach was aligned with the problem identified in this study

and facilitated the collection of in-depth data, which were analyzed through the representative bureaucracy theory lens. The data demonstrates how current public policy affects Hispanic females' attitudes toward law enforcement in general. Specifically, I collected and analyzed data with the goal of answering the RQs. The findings can help policy makers improve public policies concerning police department trust, affect the use of force, improve job satisfaction, and sustain recruitment and retention.

The population targeted for this research was Hispanic female police officers. Originally, the focus of this study was Hispanic females who entered law enforcement within 5 years of beginning this study. However, the start date criterion was removed as it excluded some participant experiences and could have affected the retention focus of the study. Furthermore, the data obtained from new and veteran officers provided an in-depth understanding of Hispanic female police officers' perspectives.

I used purposeful sampling to recruit 15 Hispanic females to ensure that data saturation was achieved. Saturation of the data was reached prior to the completion of all 15 interviews; however, all participants recruited were interviewed.

The instrument for data collection was semistructured interviews. Written informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to scheduling an interview. Informed consent was also discussed before initiating the interview, and verbal acknowledgment was obtained before initiating each interview. The data was recorded digitally with Zoom software. The audio data recorded was encrypted and password protected once the interview was concluded.

Participants were allowed to ask questions before, during, and after the interviews. The interviews took place via a webcam platform in locations where the participant and I had complete privacy. Once the interview was recorded and properly saved, the data were transcribed using NVivo software. I manually revised each transcript and ensured their accuracy compared to the audio file. Once I ensured the data were correct, I used NVivo to assist in the coding process; however, the data were not solely coded using this software. I manually reviewed the data for accuracy. Holistic and NVivo coding were used to create categories and assist in identifying themes (Saldana, 2021).

Definitions

There are several terms used in this study that are familiar in a general context. Most of the terms are defined when mentioned in the following chapters; however, some must be clearly expressed to ensure proper research information is conveyed. The following key terms are used throughout this research:

Barriers: An obstacle or something that prevents access to a service, goods, etcetera. For this study, barriers are defined as reaching a plateau where women are unable to achieve similar positions as their male counterparts (Rossler et al., 2020).

Facilitators: Someone, or something that actively makes achievement easier than if the facilitator was not present. Police facilitators are defined as a force that promotes the achievement of a goal in law enforcement (Rinehart Kochel & Gau, 2021).

Hispanic: Someone who identifies as being from or having familial ties to Spanish-speaking counties of Latin America, including those in South America, Central America, and the Caribbean. Educational and medical researchers have applied the term

Hispanic loosely as someone of Spanish or Latin descent (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Llabre, 2021)

Law enforcement agency: The state of Minnesota describes this as “a unit of state of local government that is authorized by law to grant full powers of arrest and to charge a person with the duties of preventing and detecting crime and enforcing the general criminal laws of the state” (Definitions and Scope, 2021, para. 2). Specific to this study, a law enforcement agency is a local, county, or state agency that employs individuals full-time to carry out the duties of a police officer.

Motivators: The reason a person does something or the reason for a given behavior. Motivators can be an idea or description of the will to do something based on a perspective (Jameson & Torres, 2019).

Police officer: Narrowly defined by the state of Minnesota’s Statute 626.84, which labels a police officer as a peace officer who is
an employee or an elected or appointed official of a political subdivision or law enforcement agency who is licensed by the board [Board of Police Officers Standards and Training], charged with the prevention and detection of crime and the enforcement of the general criminal laws of the state and who has the full power of arrest. (Definitions and Scope, para. 1)

For this study, a police officer is not a given rank, nor does it apply to someone holding a specific position in a police department, but is anyone able to enforce the laws as defined by the state of Minnesota.

Assumptions

Assumptions are necessary for research as a connection between the topic and theoretical framework is required to move forward with the study (O'Sullivan et al., 2016). Research assumptions are also important as one cannot know everything about the topic being researched. Several key assumptions are made in this study. First, I assumed that Hispanic females have motivators, barriers, and facilitators to become police officers. A second assumption was that Hispanic females have different motivators, barriers, and facilitators compared to male police officers. Third, I assumed that Hispanic females' motivators, barriers, and facilitators are different than those of other minority females seeking police employment. Finally, I expected that all participants were honest and would not embellish or omit information.

Scope and Delimitations

The aspects of the research problem addressed in this study were the motivators, barriers, and facilitators of Hispanic females becoming police officers. I selected these areas for examination to gain an in-depth understanding of how these may affect the recruitment and retention of Hispanic females in law enforcement.

There were areas of transferability in this study and it can be applied to other minority groups to collect data related to their populations. For example, the same research concept and design can be used to explore the perceptions of Hispanic males instead of Hispanic females, or other underrepresented female groups in law enforcement. The theoretical framework, representative bureaucracy, provided a basis to explore issues of public policy, such as the one proposed in this study.

Delimitations are under the control of the researcher; therefore, I only recruited Hispanic female police officers in the state of Minnesota to be participants in this study. Only local, county, and state, law enforcement officers were recruited to take part in this study. Furthermore, only full-time officers were included. No exclusions were made regarding law enforcement officers' time in service.

Limitations

All participants were active police officers and Hispanic females working in a police department; therefore, the sample size was limited and difficult to achieve. As this study focused on a minority population's lived experiences, participants were reluctant to share information, and some data were excluded as they directly identified the participant. Also, some Hispanic females worked for small police departments, and their experiences were known to others in the same department. Because of this, all potentially personally identifiable data were removed from the transcripts. However, this was minimized and controlled through the use of a local branch of the nonprofit agency, the National Latino Peace Officers Association (NLPOA), which provided a list of potential participants by department. I purposely selected and recruited from this list. By obtaining contact information from a third party, adequate sample size was achieved and added an additional level of confidentiality for the participants. The participants selected for the study were not disclosed to the nonprofit organization. Walden University's Instructional Review Board (IRB) and my committee chair approved the questions for this study to ensure that enough information was obtained to answer the RQs but maintained the study's integrity and participant confidentiality.

Significance

This study filled a gap in the research regarding motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers. The results of this exploration will help inform policy makers to create more equitable guidelines within police departments. Equitable policies create a more sustainable recruitment and retention process, increase public trust, decrease the use of force, and increase job satisfaction. These changes have the potential to create significant and lasting positive social change.

Summary

In this study, I explored the motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers. The theoretical framework was based on Mosher's (1982) representative bureaucracy theory, which addresses both passive and active organizational representation. A generic qualitative approach using semistructured interviews was used to collect the necessary data. The data were transcribed and coded manually and using NVivo software. More equitable policies can be created if policy makers better understand the motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers. These policy changes could create lasting positive social change. Chapter 2 includes a review of the relevant research that demonstrates the gap in the literature and further supports this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The riots following several murders of unarmed Black men suggest that law enforcement tactics must change. Police tactics range from physical appearance to the level of force used during a specific circumstance; however, these cannot be deployed without an officer available to respond to calls for service. Negative rhetoric toward law enforcement has decreased recruitment (Linos, 2018; Morrow et al., 2021). The lack of minority recruitment has also been identified as a problem linked to decreased public trust and organizational legitimacy (Miles-Johnson & Pickering, 2018). Researchers have studied the recruitment and retention of police officers from the perspective of community relations, considering nontraditional police educational backgrounds, and simplifying the hiring process. Researchers have further studied how to better attract minority officers (Lyles, 2020). However, research regarding a specific race or ethnicity has not been published. Law enforcement agencies are unable to properly recruit minority candidates if they do not know what motivates them along with barriers and facilitators. The purpose of this study was to explore the motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers in Minnesota by interviewing Hispanic females in law enforcement. In this literature review, I provide data from prior research concerning these aspects of police recruitment that will help guide this study.

Literature Search Strategy

The search for the peer-reviewed literature for this study included the following terms and phrases: *police officers*, *minority recruitment*, *police recruitment*, *police minority recruitment*, *Hispanic female police officers*, *representative bureaucracy*,

representative bureaucracy theory, motivators to become police officers, facilitators to become a police officer, barriers to becoming a police officers, barriers for minorities to become police officers, public service motivators, police officers help people, law enforcement motivators, blue wall of silence, police physical fitness test, police experience, police education, police physical fitness, police mental health, police standards, police woman, police gender equity, and police inclusion.

The search engines, tools, and databases used to obtain the literature reviewed were EBSCOhost, SAGE Journals, Google Scholar, Public Administration Abstracts, Gale Academic OneFile Select, CINAHL Plus, International Security and Counter Terrorism Reference Center, Political Science Complete, Academic Search Complete, Science Direct, and Education Sciences. The majority of the literature was peer-reviewed and published within the last 5 years. Articles beyond 5 years were included only as necessary to create an additional foundation for the research and to support the theoretical framework.

I conducted the literature review by breaking down the focus of the study into categories. First, I reviewed and considered theories regarding public policy and administration as the foundation for this study. Once I determined that representative bureaucracy theory would be the most effective, I divided the review into three categories: motivators, barriers, and facilitators. After finding information regarding these areas concerning individuals who wanted to enter the police force, I narrowed the focus to minority women entering law enforcement. However, there were no significant data applied to specific races, namely, Hispanic females.

Theoretical Foundation

Many theories were considered for the foundation of this study. However, representative bureaucracy theory was selected because of its connection to the evolution of public policy and administration over the last 5 decades (Mosher, 1982; Perry, 2007; Plant, 2008). The origin of representative bureaucracy came from Mosher's (1982) discussion of how bureaucracies can elevate different members of their organization by moving them from passive to active representation. Representative bureaucracy is categorized into two groups: active and passive (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011; Mosher, 1982). The representative bureaucracy theory was selected for this study because it provides a public policy and administration theoretical foundation. Additionally, representative bureaucracy theory shows how representation in a government institution (e.g., police departments) affects how future candidates see themselves in that organization, and is therefore likely to affect motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers.

Passive representation is achieved when bureaucracies include individuals from a specific population in their bureaucracy within the organization (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011; Mosher, 1982). Individuals included in the bureaucratic organization are not randomly selected; those employed or included by the bureaucratic organization must be representative of the population the bureaucratic organization represents. The number of individuals included must be approximately equal to the share of the population bureaucratic organization's span of control.

Active representation is achieved when a bureaucracy actively seeks to create policies that benefit everyone included in a bureaucratic organization (Mosher, 1982).

Active representation is demonstrated when a bureaucracy engages in actions that promote those identified under passive representation to benefit them. The actions of bureaucrats can be made consciously or unconsciously, but they strive to ensure everyone who would otherwise be passively represented is considered. Active representation occurs because “bureaucrats share core attitudes, values, and beliefs with the social groups from which they are drawn” (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011, p. 156).

There are no specific criteria that determine who or how many individuals are required to be in a passive or active representation group (Perry, 2007). Placement in a group is connected to how a bureaucracy employs and then later acts to create an inclusive policy. For example, the make-up of a bureaucratic organization does not need to consist of a specific percentage of females, males, races, etc. as prescribed by a formula. However, to achieve passive or active representation, those represented must feel they are proportionately included within the bureaucracy compared to the make-up of those the bureaucracy is supposed to represent (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011).

Representative bureaucracy theory originated with Mosher (1982) and was further developed by Bradbury and Kellough (2011). Mosher paved the way for understanding how passive representation could lead to active representation and create an equal employment setting, specifically in the government. In their approach Bradbury and Kellough took a deeper look at active representation and how it created a more equitable place of employment in the public service field.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

Motivators to Become a Law Enforcement Officer

For this literature review, I define motivators as the reason a person does something or for a given behavior—a desire to achieve a goal. Specifically, I review motivators for entering public service. Outside influences to positively or negatively motivate an individual to become a law enforcement officer will be discussed in the sections focusing on the facilitators and barriers to becoming a law enforcement officer.

Police officers belong to a class of workers labeled as public servants (Ilchi & Frank, 2020). It is important to understand how public service is perceived by the community at large before discussing what it means to an individual who wants to become a police officer. The tools to measure the quality of public service are not concrete but subjective. Further, each political subdivision views government differently and assesses quality of service based on experience or anecdotal information from peers (Hargreaves, 2009).

The perception an individual has of one government service may spill onto their perceptions of another (Naraidoo & Sobhee, 2021). This association may negatively or positively affect the perception of those receiving services in a political subdivision. For the purpose of this study, a political subdivision is described as a city or township that is self-governing under the umbrella of the county, state, and federal government (Nedergaard, 2019). A person who had a negative experience with a police department while visiting another city may make the same assumptions about their local department if they have not had any other experiences with them.

Researchers have attempted to measure the quality of public service by measuring several factors over time (Maple & Kebbell, 2021). Where individuals live, their level of education, the money they possess, how well streets are built and maintained, and infrastructure all play roles in determining the type of public service one will receive (Lee & Braham, 2020). For example, living in a high crime area may require more government services, such as police, fire, medical responders, and social assistance. Living in a low crime area may necessitate fewer government services and can reduce the chance of government interaction. The services distributed can be measured in “energy” (Lee & Braham, 2020).

Researchers have found that stored energy and energy flow can be an indicator of public service quality (Lee & Braham, 2020). For the public to receive equal treatment suggests that the energy spent by the government should be distributed evenly. This way, all residents would have equal government access and services. Having the same amount of contact would allow, for example, equal police interaction and for everyone to assess the level of quality provided by the police. However, a disproportionate energy flow would create a situation where some parts of a political subdivision would receive more energy and, by proxy, for example, more police attention (Nedergaard, 2019).

Motivation to become a law enforcement officer is both internal and external (White, 2001). Once an individual is aware of the law enforcement profession, something needs to prompt them to take part in that vocation. Although prior contact with law enforcement officers may shape perspectives, other factors must be considered.

Motivators to become police officers are interconnected with the desire to help others (Maple & Kebbell, 2021).

The desire to serve the community is better explained by looking at public service motivation (PSM). PSM is centered on the belief that people are predisposed to a specific position in government, which then evolves into a longing to be part of a specific organization. (Perry & Wise, 1990). In addition, there must be a selfless desire to do something positive for the benefit of a community as a whole and not just to benefit the individual (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999). To be receptive to PSMs, an individual must feel a connection to their community. A person who wants to work for a government organization, specifically a police department, must feel a sense of belonging. The sense of belonging and connection to their community are affected by personal identity and the perception of being part of a police department or other government entity. However, PSM is not the leading factor that motivates individuals to enter law enforcement (Steen et al., 2019).

Individuals are not as interested in government employment as they were decades ago (Linos & Riesch, 2020). In fact, the number of people pursuing public service has steadily declined over the last several decades (Linos, 2018). Those who apply to be front line workers, such as police officers, have joined the profession based on PSM; however, given the steady decline in police officer applicants, PSM does not impact recruitment today in the same way as it did in the past.

Researchers have studied motivators as the work itself. According to White (2001), the desire to be part of a profession may be a strong enough for people to join a

law enforcement agency without needing any other type of motivation. White researched traditional motivators for people to join a particular field and found the profession itself can be a motivator. White studied a police department for 9 months while video and still images were captured of everyday activities in the life of a police officer. A video was compiled of the images, given to all police officers, and presented at an award ceremony. White concluded that although it may not have been a motivator for everyone, showing police officers images and videos of the work they had accomplished appeared to be a motivator to continue working in the field without taking into account any other motivators. Many police officers' morale increased along with productivity the following year, according to the anecdotal data collected.

Huz and McAdams (2016) explored the interpersonal relationships of police officers. Strong interpersonal relationships created another set of motivators, such as belonging to a group of employees who looked out for one another. Huz and McAdams observed that police officers who worked well with each other were more likely to stay in law enforcement and have more job satisfaction. However, they warned that having such a strong bond between people may lead to what could be considered police corruption as it relates to the blue wall of silence and delayed litigations for officers who act outside of their duties, goes against the moral code, or may be considered illegal.

Motivators have been explored from many angles, from religious beliefs to duty to country (Andersson et al., 2017; Beyerlein et al., 2015). Most frequently researched and noted in this chapter is the ability to obtain employment compared to previous workforce experience, a decrease in emotional stress due to scholarships, the opportunity

to help people, camaraderie with fellow officers, job security, the prestige of the profession, and fighting crime (Lester, 1983; Schlosser et al., 2010; White, 2001). There are no peer-reviewed publications that qualitatively explore why individuals have been motivated to become law enforcement officers within the last 5 years. Specifically, there is no documentation as to what motivates Hispanic females to become police officers, and there is insufficient descriptive data to currently speculate.

Barriers to Becoming a Law Enforcement Officer

The research literature indicated there are psychological, physical, and perceived barriers to becoming a law enforcement officer (Linos, 2018; Linos & Riesch, 2020; Lyles, 2020). Psychological barriers range from past trauma to active mental health issues. Physical barriers include the applicant's physical fitness level or limitations such as height, eyesight, and hearing. Perceived barriers span factors such as the candidate believing they will not be welcomed as a law enforcement officer to feeling unaccepted into an agency because of a perception of the applicant.

Psychological barriers can be expectations of what a candidate must undergo on the job along with what they believe they should expect to endure during their duty (Levi, 1990). For example, police candidates are required to respond to gruesome scenes that could possibly have a negative effect on their mental health. Similarly, a police officer may be assigned to a position where they may not encounter high-risk incidents but believe they will be exposed to this situation. Regardless if a police candidate is subjected to a critical incident or believes they will be exposed to one, a psychological barrier may exist because of the stress (Levi, 1990).

Repeated or perceived exposure to psychological stress creates barriers beyond the psychological (Violanti et al., 2017). For example, a police candidate may have prior mental health conditions that could be triggered by new or perceived psychological stress, which may manifest as an additional barrier (Violanti, 2014). Stress can also have a psychological impact that may create barriers for Hispanic women to becoming law enforcement officers (McEwen, 1998). Stress has been described as a change or impact on the psyche that is stimulated by the environment or psychological mediation (Levi, 1990; Semmer et al., 2004; Webster, 2014).

Police stress falls into two categories: job content and job contexts (Violanti, 2014). Job content includes schedules, shift work, overtime requirements, and off duty call-backs, such as court and dangerous incidents that could affect the officer's physical and psychological well-being (McCanlies et al., 2014). Job context involves working for a bureaucratic employer, relationships with coworkers and with the public, and relationship changes with family and friends because of police work (Violanti et al., 2017).

Psychological barriers can quickly turn into physiological barriers (Martin et al., 2009). Primarily, there has been concern that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has become the main psychological stressor for police officers (McCanlies et al., 2014). The rationale behind concern regarding PTSD and other psychological responses to trauma is the link between psychological and physical ailments (Maia et al., 2007; Violanti, 2014). For example, researchers have found a link between PTSD and other psychological conditions associated with police work with officers being "more likely to have

conditions such as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, gastrointestinal disorders, autoimmune disorders, and chronic pain syndromes as well as experience a number of comorbid psychological conditions including depression, suicidal ideation, substance abuse, and social phobias” (Violanti et al., 2017, p. 646).

Psychological barriers can be the result of fear of future medical conditions associated with police work (Maia et al., 2007). The longer a person is a police officer, the greater their chance for repeated psychological trauma, which is associated with medical ailments. Martin et al. (2009) made a correlation between medical visits, hospitalization, and other physical-related issues and repeated psychological trauma.

Lack of emotional support may be a barrier to becoming a law enforcement officer (Violanti et al., 2017). Some Hispanic females may experience pressure not to become police officers. The lack of support increases the inability to handle emotional trauma. Emotional support, however, correlates to a decrease in PTSD and other psychological barriers to performing law enforcement duties. This decrease demonstrates that emotional support can be a shield against PTSD/mental health problems that lead to physical ailments (McCanlies et al., 2014).

Physical barriers range from physical limitations to proper training, experience, and certification. Physical barriers are reviewed in this study because departments require employees to perform at a given physical standard. For example, police departments may require that all employees be able to do several physical activities, such as push-ups, pull-ups, running, climbing, and jumping. Additional physical barriers evaluated in this study concern experience and degree requirements.

The Minnesota Board of Police Officer Standards and Training (POST) is the police licensing agency in that state. POST has several standards for individuals pursuing a police officer career and requires that individuals meet minimum standards before being allowed into a certified professional peace officer education program, which is the first step to becoming a police officer in Minnesota. Obtaining a certification from a professional peace officer program does not guarantee employment, and the fee is paid by the individual seeking certification. In its *Standards for Peace Officer Eligibility*, the Minnesota Board of POST (n.d.) requires that all individuals wanting to receive a police education meet the following:

- Passing a psychological evaluation to determine the candidate is not a danger to self or others during participation in courses that are mentally, physically, and psychologically challenging.
- Passing a criminal history screening to determine the candidates has not been convicted of a crime that is a bar to licensure according to the *Minimum Selection Standards, MN Rules 6700.0700, Subp. 1, E or F.*
- Pass a medical screening and physical fitness test. (para. 1)

Therefore, the cost to enter an accredited police academy can be a physical barrier to pursuing law enforcement. Testing and education do not guarantee a law enforcement position.

Physical barriers for individuals wanting to become police officers do not end once they become law enforcement students. Many police agencies have psychological standards that the individual must meet, which are often checked during employment

(Sellbom et al., 2021). Although the physical and psychological fitness of law enforcement officers should be optimum, they can be unfair if measured equally for everyone. For example, a young person may be physically stronger and faster than an older person but lack maturity and vice versa. A similar argument about strength can be made between males and females, although it is not always correlated (Bissett et al., 2012).

Kukić et al. (2020) examined law enforcement students' perceptions of their health along with actual health compared to their physical fitness levels, including the difference between males and females. Kukić et al. sought to identify if physical fitness levels had any impact on psychological and physical performance. Perception and health have been shown to play a significant role in physical fitness. Although not specific to every male or female, females encountered a physical barrier concerning overall strength. Women scored lower than men in physical fitness measurements (mean score) in sit-ups, hand grip, endurance, strength, coordination, and overall physical activity. Police departments that create a physical fitness standard and equally apply it to males and females will typically favor males as they are often able to demonstrate higher levels of strength. If the physical fitness standard is lowered to allow more women to pass, this will not correct the issue but instead benefit males as they will score higher on the same test. According to Kukić et al., lowering the standard will not remove the barrier as males will score better, thus placing them higher on the eligibility test regardless of how they perceived their strength compared to actual strength.

Perceived barriers can be as strong of a deterrent to joining the police force as those that are physical or psychological (Kukić et al., 2020). Perceived barriers may also be connected to physical and psychological barriers. The perception a police candidate may have of police work may be impacted by prior personal police contact (Kukić et al., 2020). This can be a significant barrier for Hispanic females to become police officers if they have been mistreated by police. A police candidate's perception of law enforcement can be affected by many factors, including anecdotal information, what they have seen police do to others, and what they believe to be facts based on a combination of both. These perceptions, which equate to barriers, are compounded if police mistreat minority status individuals (Kukić et al., 2020). These issues are summed up as police deviating from their oath to "protect and serve" (Thusi, 2020, p. 1335).

Facilitators to Becoming a Law Enforcement Officer

In this section of the literature review, I discuss whether facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers could be motivators or if barriers could also function as such. Any combination of motivators and barriers may also be considered facilitators. For example, a barrier, such as negative police contact may become a facilitator when turned into positive police contact. However, it is important to consider the literature regarding facilitators to becoming a law enforcement officer in addition to motivators and barriers.

As previously discussed, the Minnesota Board of POST (n.d.) lists the primary criteria that must be met to obtain employment in Minnesota. All candidates must have a minimum education, meet a physical fitness requirement, and pass a prescribed mental health assessment. However, nothing allows a law enforcement candidate to obtain

employment if they have more education, are in superior physical shape, or have a strong mental health assessment score. Minnesota POST requires minimums to be met for a police agency to hire an individual but does not award or encourage the hiring of someone who excels in one or all categories. Therefore, I will review the literature regarding police education, physical fitness, and mental health as they relate to facilitators for police candidates to enter and retain a position in law enforcement.

Education in policing has evolved over the last several decades. Like many other professions, education has been important in advancing the profession (Thompson & Payne, 2019). This advancement has been studied in many contexts, including professionalism and “responsiveness towards increasingly complex forms of criminal activities” (Radojičić & Čvorović, 2020, p. 117). The literature suggests that the more education a police officer has, the higher the level of professionalism (Marciniak & Elattrache, 2020). However, Radojičić and Čvorović (2020) have noted that there is no significant distinction between traditional higher education and in-house police education.

Education and training are pillars of the reform demanded by many countries regarding their police forces (Frewin, 2020; Kamis & Yoon, 2021). However, education and training are now becoming more formal regarding what is required to become a police officer. Police recruits do not require extensive training and education to obtain employment (Radojičić & Čvorović, 2020). Therefore, additional training and education could be considered a facilitator to police employment in progressive organizations. Specifically, police agencies that experience a lack of professionalism should address the

deficiency of training and education by hiring individuals with higher levels of education (Radojičić & Čvorović, 2020).

Education and training are also considered facilitators to obtaining and maintaining police employment as they teach police recruits how to better navigate the law enforcement culture. Police officers have responsibilities beyond those listed as typical duties under career standards. Those duties are derived from the sense of honor in the profession, which requires significant personal sacrifice and responsibility (Bergman & Karp, 2021). Knowledge of what to expect as a police officer while obtaining a higher education could facilitate candidates transitioning into law enforcement careers.

Education further facilitates police officer candidates' recruitment and retention. According to Bergman and Karp (2021), police candidates with higher education bring with them the knowledge they would normally not gain in on-the-job training until many years of service. Having a higher education provides candidates with the ability to function with a greater level of experience compared to recruits who do not have this background. Higher education facilitates engagement with the community as candidates may have a better understanding of the sociological needs of those they serve. It also provides the candidate with multiple perspectives of factors at play between the police and the community to help them to perform better and achieve approval by community members.

Education appears in the literature repeatedly as a missing link in achieving police professionalism. Thompson and Payne (2019) identified education as a factor that can improve police professionalism. Researchers have identified professionalism as an aspect

of policing that needs significant reform and may be the answer to institutional legitimacy (Thompson & Payne, 2019). Progressive police organizations could therefore view highly educated police candidates as those who should be employed by their agencies.

Theoretically, a highly educated candidate should have an easier time obtaining employment when compared to a candidate with less schooling. Bergman and Karp (2021) noted that the education of a candidate wanted by police departments is the level possessed by the agency's chief of police. The level of education the community believes is necessary to address professionalism may not align with the law enforcement agency's candidates' current educational level (Marciniak & Elattrache, 2020). However, where public input is implemented in the hiring process, agencies will favor any candidate who possesses a higher education (Thompson & Payne, 2019). Therefore, higher education could be considered a facilitator to obtaining and maintaining police employment (Bergman & Karp, 2021; Radojičić & Čvorović, 2020;).

A person's physical fitness level is not only an indicator of good health but also of their commitment to self-care (Bondarenko et al., 2020). Being healthy does not necessarily equate to appearing physically fit; however, a physically fit appearance is commonly viewed as a marker of good health. As previously discussed, law enforcement candidates are required to pass several mental and physical tests prior to becoming licensed in Minnesota as law enforcement officers (Minnesota Board of POST, n.d.). Therefore, being physically fit is a facilitator to becoming a law enforcement officer in

Minnesota as it provides a visual perspective of the individual's physical readiness (Korre et al., 2019).

Researchers have identified a minimum level of physical fitness as a necessary component in law enforcement (Bondarenko et al., 2020; Korre et al., 2019; Nabeel et al., 2007). Special consideration is given to a candidate's physical fitness level when assessing their readiness to be a law enforcement officer, which includes two categories: personal readiness and the physical aspects of performing law enforcement duties. A candidate who is more physically fit than others is considered a better candidate (Kukić et al., 2020). The higher the level of physical fitness of a candidate, the greater the likelihood of employment in law enforcement; therefore, this ability is considered a facilitator.

Researchers have examined the link between physical fitness and musculoskeletal injuries that occur during the performance of law enforcement duties (Bureau of Justice Assistance, n.d.; Nabeel et al., 2007). Findings showed that an increase in physical fitness was associated with a decrease in work-related injuries. However, Lentz et al. (2019) suggested that the opposite is true for female law enforcement officers. Physical fitness may be considered a facilitator for law enforcement candidates to obtain employment, but additional information is needed to determine if this is a facilitator for females to enter the profession, specifically Hispanic females.

Most police officers hired at municipal, county, and state law enforcement agencies begin their careers working as patrol officers or other positions considered entry level (Todak et al., 2021). These entry level positions usually require the officer to wear a

uniform and several pieces of equipment, such as a bulletproof vest, duty belt, handgun, and amotion. Other positions in law enforcement may not require the officer to wear a uniform and associated gear, and therefore they may meet a lower physical fitness standard. For this study, the assumed physical fitness standard will be that of an entry level police officer.

Researchers have examined the physical fitness standard of entry level law enforcement officers as they relate to patrol officer activities (Kukić et al., 2020). As previously noted, a physically fit police candidate is less likely to be injured on the job (Bureau of Justice Assistance, n.d.; Kukić et al., 2020; Lentz et al., 2019; Nabeel et al., 2007). Researchers have also examined the physical fitness assessment given by law enforcement agencies and concluded that fitness standards do not correlate to the physical demands of an entry level law enforcement officer (Bondarenko et al., 2020). Although good physical fitness is a facilitator to becoming a law enforcement officer, law enforcement agencies cannot predict a candidate's success based on this alone. The literature suggests that law enforcement candidates' physical fitness correlates to different aspects of their profession: however, a physically fit police candidate is more likely to succeed in the field than one who is poorly fit (Korre et al., 2019).

There is a significant amount of information surrounding mental health and the police. This includes how police deal with people struggling with mental health problems and also how the officer's mental health affects their actions—another important consideration when assessing a candidate's ability to perform their duties (Fleischmann et al., 2022). The absence of the proper mindset when handling certain law enforcement

incidents can have catastrophic results. According to Fleischmann et al. (2022), law enforcement officers are more likely to survive police stressors the more mentally fit they are. Specifically, law enforcement officers are more able to minimize stress, anxiety, and depression if they have good mental health before being exposed to traumatic incidents.

Fleischmann et al. (2022) divided mental health into mindfulness and self-compassion. Feeling well and the absence of troubling mental health symptoms are not enough to declare that a law enforcement candidate is mentally fit to perform their duties. Although a lack of anxiety or depression symptoms is beneficial, mindfulness, self-compassion, and the ability to distinguish between professional and personal stressors are important parts of mental health (Fleischmann et al., 2022). Kaplan et al. (2018) defined mindfulness as observing, describing, acting with awareness, nonjudging, and nonreactive. Therefore, the absence of negative mental health symptoms could reflect what a law enforcement candidate is doing to maintain good mental health (Fleischmann et al., 2022).

Self-awareness regarding mental health issues is important for law enforcement officers to be successful in the field as it affects their survival (Fleischmann et al., 2022). Studies have shown that law enforcement officers tend to underreport mental health symptoms (Marshall et al., 2021). Therefore, good mental health awareness prior to entering the police force could be a facilitator for candidates to maintain employment.

A good mental health foundation is not only a facilitator for a candidate to enter law enforcement but a requirement for police agencies to minimize liability (Fleischmann et al., 2022). Mental health issues affect more than the individual who experiences them

(Kaplan et al., 2018). A police officer with poor mental health has a negative impact on the community they serve (Kaplan et al., 2018). Researchers have argued that police officers with high levels of anxiety typically use more force (Kaplan et al., 2018). Conversely, depression can lead to officers making poor safety decisions (Fleischmann et al., 2022). An officer with good mental health will use less force and sound safety tactics (Kaplan et al., 2018; Marshall et al., 2021).

Women in Law Enforcement

Research has shown there are factors besides motivators, barriers, and facilitators that are essential for women to enter and stay in law enforcement (Fleischmann et al., 2022; Kaplan et al., 2018). Police culture, a male-dominated workplace, diversity in the police force, violence against women, occupational stress, and the expectation of women in law enforcement will be reviewed to provide a better understanding of what Hispanic women are exposed to when entering and staying in law enforcement. There is no significant literature focused on Hispanic female law enforcement. Because of this lack, I will provide a broader review of the literature concerning women in law enforcement.

For this research, police culture is defined as the general beliefs of the organization—what is and what is not considered of importance in a police organization. In a culture where males dominate the ranks, women have often been viewed as performing at a lower standard than their male counterparts (Subošić & Vranešević, 2021). Research has been conducted to examine the machismo culture in police organizations (Subošić & Vranešević, 2021). Recent findings have shown that women can maintain employment in police organizations where the machismo attitude is present.

Of significance, improvements have been observed regarding this type of police culture; however, data has shown that the competence of female police officers is still viewed differently between males and female respondents (Subošić, & Vranešević, 2021). Machismo in police departments can vary in intensity, although it still plays a role in the way those in this male-dominated profession view the capabilities of female police officers.

Traditionally, public service positions have been occupied by men (Terpstra & Schaap, 2013). Police departments are not immune to this hiring practice (Terpstra & Schaap, 2013). The lack of female police officers can be viewed as gender discrimination in the assessment of candidates in the recruitment and retention process, creating a very real glass ceiling (Chudnovsky & Millán, 2021).

Attempts to diversify the police force begin before the decision to hire a diverse group of individuals is made. A primary focus of this study is how Hispanic women view diversity based on their lived experiences. Diversifying the police force is not as simple as hiring more minority police officers. A Hispanic female's perception of the law enforcement profession is affected by motivators, barriers, and facilitators as they transition from civilians into law enforcement officers.

The desire to hire a more diverse police force may not be sufficient to satisfy the needs of diverse candidates who want to work in law enforcement. Researchers have studied the perception of minority individuals regarding police diversity as they prepare to enter the police force. Most of the research shows that minority status individuals believe that diversity in the police force is crucial to better police-community

relationships (Todak et al., 2018). Todak et al. (2018) analyzed the perception of diversity using a passive and active representation bureaucracy lens, the theoretical framework for this study.

Women are at a higher risk of being on the receiving end of violent behavior, mostly in the form of physical or sexual assault, which usually goes unreported to the police. Research has demonstrated that the way some police agencies handle complaints of abuse by women revictimizes them (Fedina et al., 2018). In addition, minority status females are more likely to be revictimized by police handling complaints of abuse when compared to their white counterparts.

In a study by Onkari and Itagi (2018), findings demonstrated that the occupational stress of women in law enforcement is different than that of their male counterparts. The researchers observed that the stress of women in this profession increased the longer they were on duty and the smaller their family size. Therefore, the more a police shift can be balanced with family life, the lower occupational stress can be observed in women in law enforcement.

The final consideration given to women in law enforcement concerns the personal and societal perceptions or expectations they relate to assumed gender roles. Research has demonstrated that self-expectations and attitudes may manifest proportionately to those beliefs (Brown & Jaffe, 2011; Koyama et al., 2005; Ladge & Little, 2019; Mahony et al., 2001). A correlation can be made between self-perception and the expectations of others. The amount of influence others' perceptions has on a person can be analyzed by

the effect it has on the individual. This effect can be subjective based on how an individual allows others' perceptions of them to become their reality.

The literature reviewed for this subtopic focused on societal expectations or assumptions of women in law enforcement. Similar expectations and assumptions that society has of females are routinely carried into the recruiting and retention of law enforcement officers. The focus of this research is to obtain information that will enable police agencies to better recruit and retain Hispanic females by exploring motivators, barriers, and facilitators to employment. However, research shows that these women are routinely portrayed as something other than what they are: a person not limited by sex or ethnicity (Walby & Joshua, 2021).

As previously noted, police departments around the world have been criticized for their lack of diversity. Although credit must be given to police agencies that attempt to diversify their force, some recruitment efforts only create a further divide. Recruiting efforts often dismiss the history of sexism and racism in many police departments, which further drives minority candidates away (Walby & Joshua, 2021). Police departments should be concerned with how they manage their recruitment image. These concerns stem from increased scrutiny regarding diversity in recruitment materials targeting minority status candidates (Jordan et al., 2009; Whetstone et al., 2006; Wood, 2017).

Finally, women worldwide were not initially included in police organizations. Women were later allowed to enter police service as an attempt at equality; however, their duties were not those included in traditional police work. Previously, their roles were those associated with caretaking, such as social service and child protection.

Research shows that it has been and continues to be a struggle for women to be viewed as equal to men in law enforcement (Diez, 2019).

Summary and Conclusions

Research has shown there are many barriers to Hispanic females becoming police officers. Similarly, there are many motivators and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers. For example, the desire to serve the public or be a community caretaker, how energy affects one's perception of being treated fairly by the government, PSM, religious beliefs, job security, prestige of profession, professional camaraderie, crimefighting, and interpersonal connections, motivates Hispanic females differently. Lack of physical fitness, unstable mental health, job-related stress, lack of emotional support, police licensing standards, self-perception of mental and physical health, and perceived barriers can hinder Hispanic females' ability to enter law enforcement. Training, education, commitment to self-care (physically and mentally), and the reduction of the topics identified under "barriers" may help facilitate Hispanic females' ability to enter law enforcement.

Other factors also affect Hispanic females entering law enforcement. Police culture alone may be an area that facilitates or creates barriers for Hispanic females to enter or stay in law enforcement. Machismo and a male-dominated workplace can also impact Hispanic females in law enforcement. Attempts to diversify the profession have made it possible for more women to enter the field; however, this can create expectations that may not be feasible or productive for anyone entering law enforcement.

What was available in the literature demonstrated there is information available pertaining to barriers, motivators, and facilitators for individuals entering public service. Specifically, ways to improve recruitment and retention in law enforcement. However, information concerning recruiting and retention in law enforcement indicated a void concerning Hispanic females' motivators, barriers, and facilitators to become police officers. In Chapter 3, I will describe the research method and procedures in which this study will be conducted.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to explore the motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers in Minnesota by interviewing Hispanic females in law enforcement. In this chapter, I will discuss the design and rationale for the study, role of the researcher, methodology, and data analysis plan. An in-depth approach to participant selection, instrumentation, and procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection will also be provided. Finally, I will address issues of trustworthiness, including ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

The RQs that guided this study were the following:

RQ1: What are the motivators for Hispanic females to become police officers?

RQ2: What are the barriers for Hispanic females to become police officers?

RQ3: What are the facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers?

There is significant quantitative and qualitative data regarding police recruiting.

The literature reviewed demonstrated that others have examined issues surrounding police recruiting by focusing on increasing positive community relations, nontraditional police education backgrounds, and simplifying the hiring process (Fischer, 2021; Huey et al., 2018; Linos, 2018; Linos & Riesch, 2020). However, researchers have not explored the hiring process concerning motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers. Research has already established that White females are hired at higher rates than non-White females (Linós, 2018). Without knowing what motivates, creates barriers for, or facilitates Hispanic females to become police officers makes it

difficult for law enforcement agencies to recruit them properly. This is compounded as the lack of minority recruitment is a problem linked to decreased public trust and organizational legitimacy (Miles-Johnson & Pickering, 2018)

The purpose of quantitative research is to determine the statistical significance of what is being studied, while qualitative research focuses on context and its meaning to individuals or groups (O'Sullivan et al., 2016; Patten & Newhart, 2017; Patton, 2021; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Saldana, 2021). In this study, I focused on the meaning and lived experiences of Hispanic females entering law enforcement. Therefore, I selected a qualitative design.

I considered three primary research designs when creating this study: phenomenology, ethnography, and generic qualitative. Although I explored the lived experiences of Hispanic females concerning motivators, barriers, and facilitators for them to become police officers, a single focus on their lived experiences or the racial composition of the population would not answer the RQs of this study. Specifically, I explored the experiences of Hispanic females—motivators, barriers, and facilitators—and did not rely on how experience affected their perspectives. Generic qualitative designs characteristically draw from concepts, models, and theories in educational, developmental, or cognitive psychology or from sociology, which provide the frameworks for the studies. Data analysis includes the use of concepts from the theoretical framework and generally results in identification of recurring patterns, categories, or factors that cut through the data and help to further delineate the theoretical framework (Caelli et al., 2003).

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher consisted of creating the foundation for the study, recruiting participants, and conducting semistructured interviews to collect data. I used software to assist with transcribing the participants' responses to my interview questions; however, I manually reviewed all data. The transcripts created by the software were not accurate and needed significant modification. I reviewed the transcript against the audio file and corrected the transcript as needed. I coded the data using NVivo software as well as manually to ensure that the transcript and data were accurate (Saldana, 2021).

My most recent profession was law enforcement. Specifically, I am a Hispanic male who was assigned several roles as a police officer, including supervisor. However, any potential participants who knew me personally or professionally were excluded from this study. I have also taken part in instructing future law enforcement students, some of whom were Hispanic females. Any Hispanic female officer influenced by me in any capacity was not allowed to participate in this study. The power imbalance that could be perceived during interviews and data collection was minimized by excluding participants whom I have instructed, supervised, or influenced either directly or perceived.

I carefully examined and mitigated researcher bias. Given my professional connection to law enforcement, I only accepted participants who were outside my circle of influence; specifically, I did not select participants I had worked with or knew. I utilized a state organization for Hispanic female police officers to assist in recruiting participants for this study; however, those associated with my community were

immediately excluded. I did not know any of the participants, nor were they familiar with me or my work.

As the researcher, I ensured all participants' confidentiality and that their identities were protected. The participants were assured that any data that identified them would not be used. I originally intended to interview participants who had 5 years or less experience to obtain data saturation. However, the time in police service was expanded to obtain 15 participants and ensured data saturation.

Informed consent is essential in all studies to strengthen credibility. All participants were given a copy of the informed consent form, which was further discussed prior to initiating the interview so they understood its contents and had time to ask questions. After the informed consent was discussed, the participants were required to verbalize their consent before the interview could proceed. The participants were given a copy of the informed consent form for their records as well as my contact information. Participants were instructed that they did not have to be part of the study and were further advised that they could withdraw consent up to the time this research was submitted for evaluation and publication. Participants were informed that the data would be permanently part of the study once it was analyzed and published.

I minimized my bias during the interviews by pausing before each meeting to become aware of any physical (e.g., posture) or mental aspects that might have influenced the participants (Fencl & Willoughby, 2019). Participants could have interpreted my tone of voice and made assumptions regarding body language; therefore, I kept a neutral posture and tone (Kirsch & Brunnhuber, 2007). Assumptions made by the

interviewees could have led them to answer questions with what they believed I wanted to hear or what they thought they should say. Additional time was taken prior to the interview to conduct a visual self-assessment, ensuring that I demonstrated nothing less than a neutral state of mind and physical appearance. I asked the participants at the beginning of the interview for their interpretations of my tone and body language to ensure it was perceived as neutral.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The participants for this study were Hispanic females who were active law enforcement officers at the time of the interviews. Originally, I had proposed using participants who had entered the police force in Minnesota within the last 5 years; however, to expand the participant pool, I eliminated this criterion. I selected 15 participants to achieve data saturation. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), the number of participants in a qualitative study is not as significant as in quantitative research. Saldana (2021) suggested that after approximately six participants, researchers should be able to observe patterns in the data and likely achieve saturation. This occurred before I interviewed all 15 participants. Once the data were obtained and analyzed, I did not recruit any further participants.

I obtained a contact list from an organization focused on serving Hispanic police officers. I contacted each participant using email or phone to recruit them for participation in this study (see Appendix B). Once the individuals agreed to participate, they were asked if they considered themselves Hispanic females and were active police

officers. Once participants indicated they met the inclusion criteria, I provided them with the informed consent along with the official invitation form for their signature. Next, I assigned each participant a number. I kept a copy of the participants' names paired with their numbers in case I needed to contact them for a follow up interview. However, no follow up interviews were needed; The data were kept, but the personal identifying information was deleted.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using semistructured interviews. The interviews contained open-ended questions as provided in the interview guide and followed a responsive interview model (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The questions were designed to elicit responses to provide data to answer the RQs. The questions focused on motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers. Because the data needed for this study were specific and the participation pool was limited, a pilot study was not conducted. The interview guide was used to obtain responses from the participants; however, follow up questions or clarifications were required to obtain additional data and allow for expansion on a topic. The interview guide was developed from the research subject and focused on the motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become law enforcement officers.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

In this study, I collected data from Hispanic females who were active police officers in the state of Minnesota I used purposeful sampling to ensure the data were from the specific population being studied (Babbie, 2017). After receiving IRB approval from

Walden University, I contacted NLPOA to recruit participants for this research. NLPOA has a Minnesota chapter with several participants who met the inclusion criteria. Details of the study were provided along with a consent form to this NLPOA chapter. I requested a list of their female members, whom I later contacted via email or phone, and recruited those who were willing to participate. More than 15 participants were identified, but only 15 were selected as part of the study. Some potential participants did not respond to the invitation or later explained they did not want to be part of the study for fear of being identified.

The participants were given an informed consent form, advised of the scope of the study, and provided time to ask questions. The participants agreed to take part in this research, and a time was scheduled to complete the interviews. The interviews took place over Zoom and were digitally audio recorded with the Zoom program. At the beginning of the interview, I advised each participant of informed consent and read it verbatim as it was approved by the IRB. The participants were required to verbalize, "I consent."

Data were collected using semistructured interviews. I asked the participants open-ended questions and allowed sufficient time for them to answer. The questions were repeated or clarified upon the request of each participant. Probing questions were asked if sufficient information was not provided by the participant. The participants were given my contact information and allowed to ask questions about the study before, during, and after the interviews. The participants were advised they could withdraw from the study at any time. Interviews were transcribed using NVivo software. I reviewed each transcript

and compared it to the audio file. I changed the words that were incorrectly transcribed by NVivo to reflect what the participant said to ensure accuracy.

Data Analysis Plan

The purpose of the data review is for the researcher to become refamiliarized with the information collected (Saldana, 2021). After manually reviewing the data, I used NVivo to help code, categorize, and identify emerging themes. The data were organized into descriptive categories to understand the motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers. I coded the data in NVivo and also used the software to assist in creating graphics for this study.

Next, I compared notes taken during the interviews with the transcripts of the participants' responses to the interview questions. Notetaking was limited to participant observations (e.g., raised voices, increased arm gestures, avoiding eye contact, taking more time than previously demonstrated to answer a question, etc.). The participants' behavior (e.g., reaction to questions such as surprise, anger, etc.) was compared to the codes noted in my manual and software review of the data to ensure accuracy.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Data were collected from the participants using semistructured interviews and open-ended questions. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and validated by comparing the transcript to the audio file to minimize misunderstanding between the participants and me. This process ensured the data reflected what the participant intended to say and not what I believed I heard. The interview guide was used to ensure the questions and probes were objective. To minimize subjectivity, I used NVivo to assist

with coding and analyzing the data. However, a manual review of the data was conducted to confirm accuracy.

Credibility

The primary method of creating and increasing credibility is by obtaining data saturation (Saldana, 2021). The credibility of the study was established by allowing the participant to review their interview transcript and confirm its accuracy. Saturation was achieved before all 15 participants were interviewed. No additional participants were recruited as data saturation was achieved (Saldana, 2021). I practiced reflexivity when conducting interviews to further strengthen the credibility of the research (Dowling, 2006).

Transferability

Transferability can be managed by maintaining as much consistency as possible throughout the data collection process (Slevin & Sines, 1999). For example, all interviews were conducted via Zoom, as even an alteration in the platform used to conduct interviews could have affected transferability. I began all interviews by answering questions the participant had regarding the study, followed by starting the recording, reading the implied consent, and then asking the interview questions. I used the same set of instructions and interview questions for each participant.

Dependability

In this study, I kept records of when the interviews took place as well as recording when I transcribed them and coded the data. Documentation of how long it took a participant to respond to a question was also part of establishing dependability for this

study. Each interview was time stamped on the file, and audit records were created when I accessed each.

Confirmability

Reflexivity is an important aspect of confirmability. Dowling (2006) argued that researchers should create as much space between themselves and participants. However, a closeness between the researcher and participant may be beneficial to the study as long as the interviews are replicated from participant to participant and deviations do not occur during the interview (Dowling, 2006). For this study, I remained aware of my body language and facial expressions to ensure the participants did not assume I expected a particular response and felt free to express their thoughts.

Ethical Procedures

Agreement to obtain access to participants was through contact with NLPOA. NLPOA did not have an IRB; therefore, the organization provided me with a list of their members' telephone numbers and emails. Additionally, a mass email was sent out to the NLPOA organization to further maximize recruitment. I was responsible for contacting each participant and informing them of who I was and the purpose of this research. First, each participant who agreed to take part in the research was sent a copy of the informed consent approved by the IRB. Second, the participant was read the informed consent form verbatim and asked to verbalize their consent. Finally, the participants were advised that no one except me would know they declined or participated in the interview.

The data collected were audio recorded and stored in a password protected computer to which only I had access. However, to maintain confidentiality, participants

were assigned a number during the interview. By assigning a number to each participant, I protected their identity while keeping records for data analysis.

Summary

The goal of this study was to better understand Hispanic females' desire to enter law enforcement, what facilitated it, and what created barriers using a generic qualitative approach. The data were collected from Hispanic females who were active law enforcement officers in Minnesota using semistructured interviews. The data were reviewed and subsequently coded manually and using NVivo software. After collecting and analyzing the data, I determined the motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers. In Chapter 4, I will discuss the setting, demographics, data collection and data analysis procedures for this study, provide the results, and address issues of trustworthiness.

Chapter 4: Results

Recently published data explores how minority females are recruited, retained, and treated by their police agencies (Lyles, 2020); however, no data have been published to the point of this writing concerning Hispanic females entering and staying in law enforcement. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that all minorities are treated the same unless there is additional data to support this assumption. It can also not be supposed that Hispanic females' desires, wants, and needs are the same as other minorities. A generic qualitative study was needed to explore the motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers in Minnesota by interviewing females in law enforcement.

There is no recent significant data concerning females entering law enforcement and even fewer data available for minority females in government. Due to the lack of data concerning subgroups of minority females, the data collected in this study may set the foundation for future research. The following RQs guided this study:

RQ1: What are the motivators for Hispanic females to become police officers in the state of Minnesota?

RQ2: What are the barriers for Hispanic females to become police officers in the state of Minnesota?

RQ3: What are the facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers in the state of Minnesota?

In this chapter, I discuss the research setting and the study participants' demographics. I also describe the data collection and analysis processes and provide

evidence of trustworthiness. Finally, I detail the results of the study based on the RQs and themes.

Setting

Finding participants for this study was difficult as the number of Hispanic female police officers was limited. Because this was a generic qualitative study with data collection through semistructured interviews, I did not conduct a pilot study to preserve the number of available and cooperative participants by interviewing them only once. This would have further reduced the number of participants that I had available for the actual study. Additionally, this also removed the possibility that I may have suggested concepts or ideas to the participants, making them second-guess their answers, as well as diminished burnout.

Minimizing my time with the participants during recruitment, the informed consent process, and interviews ensured that I had enough participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Although I began to code and themes emerged after approximately five interviews, I conducted 15 to ensure data saturation (Patton, 2021; Saldana, 2021). Data saturation was essential to establish credibility and reliability. Stopping the study after only a few participants would not have allowed me to collect the in-depth data needed.

Face-to-face in-person interviews were not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To remedy the situation, I used the internet-based platform Zoom to conduct the semistructured interviews. Using open-ended rather than closed questions helped the participants share as much information as they wished rather than replying with yes or no answers. I controlled what was visible to the participant; the same background was used

in each interview to minimize any possible external influences. I conducted all interviews via the internet, which removed the possibility of a health injury to the participants or myself. I did not have any physical contact with the participants, so there was no exposure to COVID-19 for either party.

The timing of this study must be mentioned as it may influence the interpretation of the participants' lived experiences. The last several years have been difficult for the police as many high-profile incidents have been covered extensively by the media regarding police use of force against minorities. Specifically, White male police officers have been accused of using excessive force against minorities. Such actions are detrimental to police and community relations (Miles-Johnson & Pickering, 2018). The analyzed data showed that the participants were neutral regarding the police dealing with minorities. However, 90 negative and 61 mixed coding references showed the participants had a somewhat negative view of how police officers treated minorities in this time of high-profile police incidents between minorities and White male police officers.

Demographics

The demographics for this study were specific to Hispanic female police officers. Participants had to self-identify as Hispanic females and be active police officers during the recruitment and selection process to qualify as a participant. Originally, the participant needed to have 5 years of police service prior to the study, but I had to expand it to include any active police officers who were Hispanic females. The change was

necessary to ensure I was able to recruit 15 participants; however, the participants still had to be active police officers.

The changes to the participants' demographics were foreseeable. In this study, I aimed to (a) understand the participants' experiences, (b) how they constructed their environments, and (c) interpreted their lived experiences regarding becoming police officers. Semistructured interviews allowed for data to be collected from this demographic. Although the time in service was changed, all participants were active law enforcement. Additionally, collecting data from a time in service that ranged from rookie to veteran police officer provided a more well-rounded dataset.

Data Collection

The data collection process began immediately after receiving Walden University's IRB approval (No. 05-16-22-1031583). I contacted the Minnesota chapter of NLPOA via email (see Appendix B). Once the organization clarified it did not have an IRB, the research was ready to begin without needing external IRB approval. The informed consent form, previously approved by Walden University's IRB, was sent to the NLPOA organizational leaders at the state level. Once the organization agreed to take part, I sent the official invitation to participate in the research for distribution among their members (see Appendix C).

A total of 15 participants meeting the inclusion criteria were selected to participate in this study. Each participant was given an alphanumeric identifier randomly from 1 to 15 (e.g., P1, P2, P3, etc.). The interviews took place via Zoom at a time convenient for each participant. At the beginning of the interview, I asked the participant

if they had questions about the study before I initiated the formal interview. Additionally, I requested that the participants turn their cell phones off to ensure there were no distractions. I further asked the participant to be in a quiet, private room for the duration of the interview.

Once the participant indicated they did not have questions about confidentiality, interview duration, etcetera, I initiated the audio recording. The initial part of the audio recording contained the informed consent previously sent to the participant, which I read verbatim. The participant was also required to verbalize, "I consent," before continuing the interview. All participants understood the informed consent and agreed.

I interviewed each participant once; however, some participants requested pauses during the interview to attend to personal needs (e.g., bathroom, check on other members of the family, etc.). The interviews lasted approximately 1 hour. There were no data collection variations; I conducted all interviews using the same online platform. No unusual circumstances were encountered during the data collection phase.

Data Analysis

The lens used to create the RQs and interview questions stemmed from Mosher's (1982) representative bureaucracy theory. However, the research focused on obtaining as much data as possible concerning Hispanic females in law enforcement. In this study, I focused on patterns in the data to code and established relationships within codes and emerging themes. The data were coded utilizing NVivo Version 12 as well as manual holistic coding (Saldana, 2021).

The raw audio-recorded data was initially transcribed using the NVivo software without accuracy. Most participants had accents and were not provided with the questions ahead of time to have an answer readily available during the interview. The participants frequently paused, repeated words, and sometimes strayed from the questions. I reviewed each transcript against the audio file and to ensure its accuracy. The data was then cleaned by removing unnecessary wording that had no meaning or would create coding problems, such as “um,” “hummm,” and other related jargon. Spoken language may not always fit the proper written format when transcribing word for word. I organized the words so fragments were connected to make a sentence, with partial sentences combined to make full sentences. I only changed the transcripts so data were not lost or added but made sense in a written format and during the coding process. Transcribed data analyzed were based only on participants’ answers. Any words or data captured during the initial interview, such as the interview questions, were removed from the data set.

Although I used NVivo as the primary source for coding, to get a basic understanding of the data, I holistically coded the aggregate data of all participants (Saldana, 2021). The purpose of holistic coding is to get a “broad brush-stroke representation” (Saldana, 2021, p. 23) of the data. Five common terms resulted from this method and included “police” (252 mentions), “officer” (95 mentions), “department” (89 mentions), “females” (65 mentions), and “people” (63 mentions). This type of coding demonstrated the participants were engaged in talking about police officers, police departments, and people, which were three main concepts of this research.

The data was broken down into three major classifications, which corresponded to the RQs: motivators, barriers, and facilitators. I used NVivo 12 software to organize and provide additional information about the data; however, it was manually organized into the major categories. After the first round of coding, I placed the data in the appropriate main category and identified 28 codes. The codes were then organized into three themes under each topic for a total of nine (Saldana, 2021). For example, the subthemes “lack of guidance,” “lack of family support,” and “lack of self-support” were joined together to create the theme of “lack of support” under the main topic labeled “barriers.” The same was done for “motivators” and “facilitators” until there were three main themes for each RQ. This ensured the data was manageable and easily understood. Table 1 shows the final themes under each major category.

Table 1

Major Categories and Themes

Motivators	Barriers	Facilitators
Pay	Guidance	Background
Positive police contact	Negative police contact	Education
Purpose	Difficult field to enter	Support

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I achieved credibility for this study by creating an interview process to collect as much data as possible from each participant. Although themes began to emerge after interviewing five participants, I interviewed 15 to ensure data saturation. By obtaining data saturation, I confirmed that the codes and themes that emerged during data analysis

were consistent and provided a strong study foundation (Saldana, 2021). I conducted the interviews in such a way that I did not introduce any bias I might have had by practicing reflexivity (Dowling, 2006) before each interview, and being mindful to stay within the confines of the interview guide. I only asked additional questions to clarify the initial question. In addition, I did not stop collecting data until all participants were interviewed to ensure redundancy, thus achieving data saturation.

Transferability

Transferability was managed by maintaining consistency throughout the data collection and analysis process (Slevin & Sines, 1999). I recruited and interviewed all participants using the same process and method. The participants were emailed an electronic invitation to participate in the research process. If they agreed to participate, I emailed them a copy of the official invitation to participate in the research along with a copy of the informed consent to ensure they were properly informed before continuing the research process. I conducted the interviews via Zoom.

I began all interviews by answering questions the participant had regarding the study, followed by starting the recording, reading the implied consent, and then asking the interview questions. I used the same set of instructions and interview questions for each participant. Deviations from the interview guide were sometimes needed to explain a question to a participant if they requested further clarification.

Dependability

In this study, I achieved dependability by maximizing technology. I identified each interview with its date, time, and recorded its length. The interview transcripts were

saved in NVivo, generating an audit trail. The figures created in Nvivo were also marked with the date and time. All data can be tracked from when it was collected and analyzed to when visuals were produced.

Confirmability

Dowling (2006) argued that there should be as much space as possible between the researcher and the participants. In this study, I created distance between the participant and myself during each interview by allowing the interviewee to speak until they had no more to add. This approach allowed me to obtain as much data as possible while engaging in reflexivity (Dowling, 2006). Effective interaction was achieved while maintaining reflexivity during the interview by asking clarifying questions, which created a sense of active listening. I avoided crossing my arms or changing my body posture during all interviews. Although an open-ended question may have led to a follow-up question for data classification, I maintained an even tone of voice and volume with all questions posed to the interviewees to ensure confirmability.

Results

The results of this study show that Hispanic females have motivators, barriers, and facilitators to becoming police officers in Minnesota. Not all participants provided the same data in their responses to the interview questions. However, using NVivo and manual holistic coding, I identified three themes for each RQ for a total of nine. The results section of this study is organized by RQ (motivators, barriers, and facilitators) and their related themes.

Results for Research Question 1

RQ 1 asked, “What are the motivators for Hispanic females to become police officers in the state of Minnesota?” The data from the 15 participants were collected and analyzed to help answer this RQ. Three themes emerged for this RQ: pay, positive police contact, and purpose.

Theme 1: Pay

The theme, pay, began as a code but emerged as a theme. I determined this based on the data collection and coding processes. The word was repeated 27 times. Eleven out of 15 participants mentioned pay as a motivator. Pay was mentioned as income obtained from a police officer department job or money needed to fund education. The participants spoke about pay or money more than once during the interviews. P2 noted, “My dad helped pay for me to go to back to school. The current pay keeps me employed. P3 added that pay was a motivator to stay in the police profession. P5 stated, “I make enough money to pay for bills and live comfortably.” P6 explained, “The paycheck helps me pay the bills.”

Better pay was also noted as a motivator to stay in the police field. P8 agreed, “My department has increased pay, benefits, etcetera.” P12 noted, “I need money and on-time pay. Department pays okay, and they pay on time. I can continue to pay bills.” P7, however, complained about “not having enough money to pay the bills and the financial assets to pay for school. Most people do not get paid enough.” P9 added, “I had to work to pay for school. I needed better pay. Pay is not always steady.”

The rationale given by the participants for unsteady pay was that police officers do not always work a set number of hours or make the same amount of money each paycheck. Instead, they work a minimum amount of time for a set pay per hour. However, officers work overtime, which makes their paycheck increase. P14 mentioned, “Pay for what I need. Pay the bills. I need money to pay bills. Finding money to pay for school. Paying for things. Worked extra hours for pay. Pay cut. Lesser pay. Pay more.” P10 added, “Of course, [a] pay increase will help me stay in this profession” P15 stated, “Pay increases are needed.” Hispanic females overall agreed that their pay was less than it should be, although other Hispanic females are able to pay their bills with the current pay they receive.

Theme 2: Positive Police Contact

The theme of positive police contact was not limited to the participants’ positive experiences. Positive police experiences included those of others as interpreted by the participant. For example, some participants may not have had personal contact with the police but saw officers helping others. No contact with the police was also considered positive police contact as it prompted the participant to assume a future career was good or neutral versus being negative. Similarly, participants may have heard of positive police actions. A combination of lived experience by the participant and their interpretation of others’ experiences led them to have positive police contact perceptions that motivated them to become police officers. Several participants discussed their family’s contact with law enforcement. P1 noted,

My family has not had any contact with the police. Maybe, they [family] had regular contact with the police and no more contact than a regular person. I was aware of regular every contact between the police and the community.

P5 stated, "I did not have any more police contact than the average person. My family had police contact but was in the form of getting help with a parking ticket or a car accident." P10 had numerous experiences: "My family was always in contact with the police because we had many relatives that were police officers."

P8 stated neutrality on the subject: "I did not have good or bad police contact. I did not have any positive or negative police contact. My family did not have any negative of positive contact with the police." P13 added,

I did not have many police contacts other than my dad and when his police officer friends came over. My father or his friends were nice, and I considered all of them to be good and [they] gave me a good sense of police community.

P7 mentioned, "The only police contact I had was seeing them driving and working around town." P2 discussed her family's contact as well as her own experiences with the police:

My family's contact with the police was not positive but was also not negative. My sister, however, had nothing but positive contact with the school resource officer. My family had contact with the police mainly because my dad drank a lot of alcohol. I lived through a scary positive police contact. Someone broke into my apartment, and the police took him down. It was scary, but the police saved me and my mother. So, we mainly had positive police contact.

Likewise, P11 stated, “My brother had mental health issues and was always dealing with the police. I did not have any negative police contact with the police. My family had to deal with the police on many occasions because of my brother.”

P3 discussed her contact within her department: “[I have a] positive and inclusive police department. My chief is very positive and good with training and encouragement.”

P9 described her previous employment and contact with police:

I worked as a security guard and had a lot of police contact. All the police contact was good as the police helped me perform my security job. My brother did not have good experiences with the police, but all my experiences with the police were good.

Some participants did not have contact with the police until they entered the academy. P15 described, “I did not have any police contact before becoming a police officer. The only contact I had with the police was during the police academy. My family also did not have any negative police contacts.” P6 added, “The only police contact I had with the police was during skills. I really enjoyed skills.” P4 indicated she did not want negative contact with police as she knew she wanted to become an officer one day.

I had minor police contact. I avoided police contact as I knew they would hurt me in the long run when looking for a police job. I knew that negative police contact was going to hurt my future career in law enforcement.

Most of the Hispanic females in this study mentioned that police contact was something they had experienced. The participants discussed having police contact as a way of life

and not out of the ordinary, regardless of the contact being positive, negative, or what they were told by members of their community.

Theme 3: Purpose

The theme, purpose, was developed out of codes from the participants' data regarding wanting to be a police officer, becoming a police officer, proving to themselves they could be a police officer, proving to others that they can be a police officer, and proving to their family they could be a police officer. All participants had a reason why they believed in a purpose in selecting a law enforcement career, ranging from following in family footsteps, proving themselves, and visualizing themselves in the uniform. P1 stated,

I want to be a cop. I always wanted to be a police officer. I always wanted to wear the uniform. I wanted to be the change my community needed, and police officers can do that. I wanted to prove people wrong and that as a female, I could be a police officer. I like being the one that helps victims. I like being the one that shows up to help. I like to be the person people look up [to] when they need help.

P4 added,

I like being able to chase bad people. I like the action and being constantly busy. I like being able to help people as part of my job. I wanted a job where I could help people daily. I want to catch bad people and protect innocent people from getting hurt.

P12 expressed her happiness when helping others: "I like to see people's faces when they need help, and I show up. I am the one that stops bad people from hurting more people."

P14 also was enthusiastic about helping others: “I have a desire to be the one to save people. I joined the police force to be the one that stopped others from hurting people in the community. I feel like I belong.” P15 echoed that being a police officer gave them a “feeling of belonging and having an extended family that will watch your back.”

Several participants indicated they wanted to help others and represent their Latino or Hispanic community or break through cultural barriers. P2 claimed, “I wanted something challenging and exciting. I wanted a job where I could make a difference. I wanted to help people. I wanted to be the person that stood up and represented the Latinos in my community.”

P8 wanted to help others within her community: “I always wanted to help people. Law enforcement is the field I selected to help people. I want to be the voice of my police department to communicate with the Latino community.”

P11 elaborated,

Some people do not get treated fairly because they are Brown. I want to make a difference and ensure everyone is treated equally and fairly. I like to help people that struggle keep moving forward. I want to build a relationship between the police and the community. I want other Hispanic females to look at me and say, look at her; I can do that too.

Several participants wanted to break gender barriers. P6 stated, “I want to be the one who breaks the mold and who other Hispanic females can look up to be great police officers.” P7 was proud of her accomplishment:

I wanted to be successful. I did not see any Latinas in the place I applied for work.

I wanted to be the first Latina to work for the police department I work for. I was the first female police officer to get hired in my police department.

P3 explained,

I wanted to do something that only males did. I wanted to be in a position of service that others wanted to have around. I want to be trusted. I wanted to feel like I was wanted by my employer.

P9 added, “My family was very gender role oriented. I wanted to break the mold and become a police officer. I always wanted to be Wonder Woman. I get to be Wonder Woman working as a police officer.”

Finally, some participants discussed their purpose in becoming police officers regarding their families. P5 noted, “I want to give my younger brother a sense of protection. I want my brother to be able to tell his friends that his sister is a police officer and be proud.” P10 shared her family experience:

My father was a police officer. My father shared a lot of stories with us when growing up, which is probably what got me thinking about becoming a police officer. I want to be the first face people see when help arrives. I want to be able to see people relieved with my presence. I want to be part of the stories that you hear about good police officers and how they can make a difference in the community.

P13 explained, “I became accustomed seeing people in police uniforms. My dad was a police officer and wore the uniform. I am looked at as if I was my dad when I wear my

uniform.” Hispanic females in this study expressed they felt as if they were following in the footsteps of their family, which gave them a sense of belonging and accomplishment.

Results for Research Question 2

RQ2 asked, “What are the barriers for Hispanic females to become police officers in the state of Minnesota?” The data from the 15 participants were collected and analyzed to help answer this RQ. Three themes emerged for this RQ: guidance, negative police contact, and difficult field to enter.

Theme 1: Guidance

The theme, guidance, was a combination of a lack of guidance, improper guidance, English as a second language (ESL), lack of citizenship, lack of family support, lack of community support, mental health issues, and being a single mother. A Hispanic female verbalizing or informing teachers or other adults that she wants to enter law enforcement should be advised that English proficiency is essential. Hispanic females who need to improve their English skills should be encouraged to attend additional courses to increase ESL proficiency. Those with whom police officers interact must be able to understand police commands clearly. Similarly, police officers involved with the community must understand community members easily without asking repetitive questions. P5 stated,

My first language is Spanish. My entire family spoke Spanish at home. I had to learn English when we moved to the U.S. I had to learn English to start school. ESL hurt my chances to get hired as a police officer. Police officer interviews were difficult because of ESL.

P2 also struggled with English:

I had support from many people because they knew this is what I wanted to do. My dad spoke English, but my mother did not. I did not know English well and had a hard time understanding people. My mother did not speak English.

P7 recalled,

I did not feel like I had support from anyone. It was hard to get into law enforcement without support. I lacked support. English is my second language. Spanish was the only language used at home. Police departments did not care about a second language or diversity when I first looked for jobs. Not having a second language or having ESL made it harder to get a police job.

P11 noted,

The language barrier made it difficult to deal with the police when I first came to the U.S. We would sometimes call the police for assistance, but they lost interest in what happened when nobody spoke English or had ESL.

Police officers are required to be us citizens (Minnesota Board of POST, n.d.).

Hispanic females wishing to enter law enforcement should be guided in a way that they become eligible for residency and eventually citizenship. P13 noted how her poor English and her family's desire for her to become a citizen impacted her:

Having the support of my family really helps. My English was horrible, which made it hard to communicate. My family moved to the US when I was young because my dad knew it would help me get citizenship to pursue any career I wanted.

P14 was grateful for assistance in becoming a U.S. citizen: “My mother is a great support structure. I qualified for citizenship during school, which made me eligible to be a police officer.” P6 also noted, “The support of my parents kept me going. I was granted citizenship because My mother moved here when she was pregnant, and I was born in the U.S.”

Support is needed to complete additional English courses or have a clear path to citizenship. Lack of community support makes it difficult for anyone to attain a job in a profession that one’s neighbors dislike. Being a single mother without family support makes it difficult for a new police recruit to leave a child for extended periods. Lacking access to resources to identify and treat mental health conditions will eventually disqualify a police candidate during their mental health assessment as required by the Minnesota Board of POST (n.d.). A Hispanic female with a history of depression or anxiety, which was appropriately treated, will increase their chance of passing the required psychological examination. Additionally, entering a male-dominated profession makes it difficult for Hispanic females to be allowed into the field. P3 noted, “Culturally, women, Latino females are not to be in police roles because that is looked at more of some male career.” P1 noted,

I never had any support, even when I asked for it. I did not have any support. I did not have support from anyone. I do not get the support from my community. I moved to Minnesota, and English became my second language, and it was a cultural shock. Police incidents that I have responded to have already affected me mentally. I am a single mother to two children.

P8 explained, “I did not have any real support structures to get to where I am today.” P3 had support from her peers but acknowledged language, citizenship, and childcare can be obstacles to becoming a police officer:

It was hard to get in this field and stay in this field without support. I have a lot of support from my peers. A lot of people in the Hispanic community do not speak the language. You must have citizenship to become a police officer. Not having means to pay for daycare makes it difficult for me as a single mother to enter law enforcement.

P9 also mentioned the support of her peers and family after she became an officer and addressed mental health and citizenship issues:

I supported myself during the process. Only other police officers have been supportive of me being in law enforcement. My peers have become my support structures. Now that I am married, my husband supports me. The lack of a role model or support made it difficult to enter law enforcement. Nobody in my family spoke English which made it hard to learn the language. There is not a lot of support from police departments concerning mental health. I was older when I entered law enforcement because I needed citizenship. I did not have citizenship when I finished school and was not allowed to become a police officer. I was able to join a police department once I had my citizenship. I was single for many years, and [it] was difficult to maintain my law enforcement profession as a single mother.

P10 also mentioned the lack of support:

I went through college without support. The support of my family was very important, but I never got it. Hispanic females wanting to get into law enforcement need to find family or any sort of support before they get into the profession. I did not know anyone in law enforcement. My family did not support me in my decision to become a police officer. Not having my family's support was hard. I am a single mother.

P7 elaborated, "The mental health abuse we receive while working is sometimes hard to process. I am a single mother, and it is hard to find police work while figuring out care for my child." P11 discussed challenges when others in the family impact their potential to become police officers: "There are mental health issues in my family which created negative police contact. My brother attracted police attention due to his mental health, which in turn affected my chances to get hired. I am a single mother."

Several participants indicated that they experienced support from family members. P11 explained, "My grandfather, mother, and husband are great support structures for me. It would be difficult to do my job with a child and not have family support. You really need a lot of support when you get started in law enforcement." P15 stated, "My mother was my main support structure once I started in law enforcement. My mother supported me regardless of her reservations." P12 declared, "[The] support of my parents is what keeps me going." Hispanic females in this study indicated the need for support as they entered a field that is male dominated while at the same time, their families may not want them to become police officers.

Theme 2: Negative Police Contact

Negative police contact was a significant barrier discussed by Hispanic females wanting to enter law enforcement. Negative police contact could result in a criminal record that barred them from employment for a considerable time. Negative police contact also changed how Hispanic females viewed law enforcement, making it difficult to decide to join a police department. Negative contact with the community in which Hispanic females often lived made it hard for them to speak publicly about their desire to enter law enforcement. Police contact, regardless of disposition, influenced Hispanic females in that it created a significant barrier to seeking or remaining employed as police officers. Community treatment of Hispanic police officers also made it so that they had negative contact with the public. P1 discussed both her negative encounters and community challenges:

I had two separate police encounters that resulted in negative police contact. The negative police contact resulted in a significant delay to enter law enforcement. I sometime feel like leaving my job when random community members interject themselves into an incident to get a negative reaction out of me.

P4 shared, “I avoided negative police contact because I knew it would make it hard for me to become a police officer. Not having anything negative in my background increased my chances of getting a job.” P5 noted, “There is a lot of negative publicity against police officers. I think that not having anything in my background helped me get a job quickly.” P11 discussed a family member’s negative contact:

I did not have any personal negative experience with the police, but many people in my community did. A family member has mental health issues and is routinely involved with the police negatively. I have witnessed the police treat family members poorly during negative police contact.

As previously mentioned, many participants experienced negative contact with the community. P7 regretted her decision to become a police officer: “If I were to do things all over, I would not be in law enforcement for many reasons. One reason being the negative attention that trickles down to me personally.” P8 also commented on the negative contact with the community affecting her decision to remain an officer: “All the negative police attention actually affects my decision to stay in law enforcement.” P3 added, “The negative perception that now law enforcement is bad after what happened to George Floyd. Coworkers speak badly about Hispanic female police officers.” P2 shared,

My experience with the police were not positive but were also not the most negative. The community [Hispanic] has a negative sentiment about the police.

The constant negative comments and yelling at me make me want to leave on the spot.

Finally, P11 stated, “After recent high-profile incidents between my community and the police, the negative treatment I receive has increased.” The participants indicated that being involved in negative police contact as a police candidate is scrutinized more than someone who seeks employment in a field where a security clearance or high level of community trust is not necessary to perform that profession.

Theme 3: Difficult Field to Enter

According to all participants interviewed, law enforcement is a difficult field for anyone to enter. Not only is law enforcement a challenging career, but White men also dominate it. Hispanic females face difficulties entering law enforcement and experience traditional barriers as they remain in the profession, such as assuming a role that goes against cultural beliefs. P2 noted a lack of experience was challenging: “It was very difficult for me to enter and stay in law enforcement because I did not have the law enforcement background.” P9 also discussed her lack of preparation: “The police academy was very hard for me, and I was not prepared to do the job. The first few years on the job were very difficult for me.” P6 added, “It took me a long time from the time I finished school to the time that I was able to get a job in law enforcement. I almost stopped looking for a police position and transitioned into something else.” P15 described the job interview process: “I went to many interviews but never got the actual job. It took me a long time to get a job as a police officer.” P14 noted, “Finding money to pay for the school made it difficult for me to get the credentials to even apply for a police job. The current political atmosphere makes it hard for me to stay.” Finally, P8 detailed how after being hired as an officer, she experienced uncertainty: “It was difficult to get settled in my role as a police officer, which made me question if I was even in the correct career.”

Several participants described their experiences not only as a woman seeking a career as a police officer but also as a Hispanic. P3 explained,

Having a female show up at the scene that has an accent and does not look like a regular police officer makes my interaction with the public difficult at times. I did

not know what to expect going into law enforcement, which made it difficult to become a police officer.

P12 reflected, “The police culture made it hard for me to become a police officer. I applied at many places, but only the White men would get hired. There were many more applicants than vacancies.” P7 discussed the difficulty getting a job due to her gender:

There were more applicants than vacancies. Police agencies were interested in White men when I started to get into law enforcement which made it difficult for me to get a job. Being a female almost counted against you. I was able to get into law enforcement when there was a big push to hire more women.

P10 expressed her frustration: “I come from a law enforcement family and was more prepared than others. However, being in a male-dominated profession makes it difficult to be who you truly are.” P14 explained, “It seems like many agencies have a good old boys club, and those people get the best position. As a Hispanic female, I get whatever is left over.” P4 did not experience the same difficulties regarding her ethnicity as other participants; however, she relayed her coworkers’ comments:

I did not have a hard time getting into law enforcement because I do not look like I am Hispanic. I have spoken with other Hispanic police officers that look Hispanic, and they have talked about how hard it was for them to enter the field. I do have a hard time staying because of the way I am treated by the community.

P13 echoed what all the participants experienced: “I needed a lot of energy to push through difficult situations.” The Hispanic females in this study demonstrate that

although it is hard to get into the law enforcement field, they are willing to work other jobs while they pursue this career.

Results for Research Question 3

RQ3 asked, “What are the facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers in the state of Minnesota?” The data from the 15 participants were collected and analyzed to help answer this RQ. Three themes emerged for this RQ: background, education, and support.

Theme 1: Background

The background theme reflected prior professional and personal experiences that were facilitators of the participants becoming police officers. Prior police or closely related experience helped Hispanic females get a police officer job sooner than those without this background. Not having a criminal record and participating in police-community activities were also facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers. P1 stated, “I had two police encounters that resulted in getting arrested for criminal conduct. It took me 20 years to overcome the negative police contact to get hired.” P3 stated, “Those that came from a military background or from a family that had other law enforcement officers seemed to have an easier time getting through the academy.” P5 added, “Having a good background. You need to keep your record clean and get a four-year degree.” P6 explained, “If you want to become a police officer, you need a good background.” P4 concurred that “not having anything negative in my background” helped her get a job in law enforcement. P10 noted,

I grew up around the police with family members but did not have any actual police experience. The lack of police experience made it hard to get a job, but the association to police work made it easy for me.

Theme 2: Education

The theme, education, was closely aligned with the theme, background. Again, the participants had a better chance of being hired with a college education, especially if they had a 4-year degree. P14 stated,

I have a bachelor's degree in law enforcement. I had a better chance to get hired with a 4-year degree than a 2-year degree. It was more challenging to get a 4-year degree compared to a 2-year degree, but I feel like I obtained employment faster.

P5 agreed,

An undergraduate degree helped me get a job right after college. I decided to get a 4-year degree and then pursue a career in law enforcement. Having a 4-year degree gave me the edge over the applicants that only had a 2-year degree.

P13 added, "I have a bachelor's degree. Having a 4-year degree helped me with getting more points while getting hired. The education also gave me a big-picture understanding of what policing should be." P4 noted that her language skills augmented her education: "Having a 4-year degree and speaking Spanish helped me get a job quickly. You need to have at least a 2-year degree and skills [police academy] but better to have a 4-year degree to enter law enforcement." P1 indicated that it could be more challenging to be hired with an associate degree or without experience:

Education is one of the most important things to becoming a police officer. I had a good education. I have a degree in corrections. It was hard to obtain a job with only a 2-year degree in corrections. I had no prior police experience and was not hired right away.

Finally, P3 commented, "I have the required degree to become a police officer. I find it easy to do this job now that I have experience."

Some participants indicated they needed further education to enter or advance in law enforcement. P2 stated, "I already had a degree when I decided to go into law enforcement. I went back to school to take the classes needed to be eligible to take the police state exam." P7 noted, "I have a 2-year degree but would like to go back for a 4-year degree." P15 discussed her department's encouragement to pursue additional education: "I have a 2 and a 4-year degree in criminal justice. We are incentivized by our department to get a 4-year and graduate degree in criminal justice." P8 expressed the hardships of obtaining an education to become a police officer:

It was hard enough to go to school for 2 years as I did not have a lot of time. I wanted to get a 4-year degree to have a better chance of getting a job. I was able to get a job with a 2-year degree, so I was not going to spend money or get in debt for a 4-year degree at that time.

Several participants indicated they had obtained degrees before their employment. P6 stated, "I obtained a 2-year degree and skills [at the police academy] before I obtained police employment." P9 had two degrees: "I have a noncriminal justice 4-year degree and a second degree in criminal justice." P10 also had extensive education: "I have a criminal

justice background. I have a college education. I have a 4-year degree with two majors.” P11 also had a diverse educational history: “I have a medical and a police background. I have medical and criminal justice education. I have a 4-year degree in law enforcement.” As discussed, POST only requires a 2-year degree to become a police officer in Minnesota. However, Hispanic females mentioned that it is easier to obtain employment with a higher level of education compared with having only a 2-year degree.

Theme 3: Support

The theme, support, emerged by examining codes concerning family, friends, and peer support. The Hispanic females interviewed for this study commented that getting into and staying in the profession was not as difficult with support. Some Hispanic females’ path to becoming law enforcement officers was smoother through emotional support, while others benefited from financial assistance, helping around the house, and childcare. P2 acknowledged, “I have a lot of support from family that made it easy to get into law enforcement.” P4 stated, “Both of my parents are support structures for me.” P6 added, “My parents are my support structure [for] getting in and staying in law enforcement.” P12 noted that “the support of my parents is what helped me make it into law enforcement.” P13 also credited her family, “Knowing that I have the support of my family helps me stay in law enforcement.”

Several participants noted that the support of their mothers helped them through the hiring and retention process. P5 stated, “My mom is my main supporter. Even after all of the negative publicity, my mom’s supports help me stay in law enforcement.” P14 also credited her mother: “My mother was and still is my number one support structure.”

P15 elaborated further,

My mother became my main support structure once I started law enforcement.

My mother did not want me to get into law enforcement but supported me anyway. The support of my mother and, later, the support of my husband made it easy for me to become a police officer. I will stay with my police department if they continue to support me and treat me like everyone else.

P10 also expressed that her parents, especially her mother supported her.

My parents supported me during my college education. I do not think I would have made it through college without their support. The support of my family, especially my mother, and the bonds I have with some coworkers makes it easier for me to stay in law enforcement. To future Hispanic females: make sure that you find support.

P1 noted the support of her mother but lacked help from friends and peers:

I live almost next to my mother, and she has been and continues to be the biggest support in my life. However, I did not have any support when I was in corrections attempting to become a police officer. I did not have any friends or coworkers that supported me as I attempted to switch from correction to law enforcement. The lack of support makes it hard for me to stay at my job sometimes because I require childcare.

Other participants had the support of both male and female family members. P9 stated, "My husband is in law enforcement, and he is the most significant structure that I

have. We support each other, and it has helped both of us to stay in law enforcement.”

P11 added that while she had family support, a workplace mentor would be helpful:

My grandfather and mother are my support structures. My husband is also a great support structure. Police agencies can ensure I stay with them by having more support from at work, like a mentor or someone I can talk to that is not a supervisor.

P3 indicated that they lacked support from their family but experienced it from their peers:

Not having family support because of cultural beliefs made it hard for me to become and stay in law enforcement. I feel appreciated by my police department because I have a lot of support from my peers and my supervisors to get to where I am today in my police department. I feel appreciated.

P7 stated that she had no support system: “The lack of support made it hard for me to get in and stay in law enforcement. I did not feel like I had support from anyone.” Finally, P8 expressed the difficulty in not having her family’s support: “I did not have any real support structures to help me get into law enforcement. My family means a lot to me. Nothing having their support was hard. Not having any support made it even harder.”

The Hispanic females in this study had or have some level of support from family, friends, or coworkers. Some began the journey to become police officers with little or no support, while others had a significant amount. Conversely, some participants pursued their careers as police officers with a great deal of support but ended up with very little. The Hispanic females in this study found support to be an important facilitator

Summary

The answers to each RQ were obtained through the data collected in semistructured interviews with 15 Hispanic females who self-identified as active police officers. The data in the transcripts were coded and categorized for each RQ. Codes were then developed into three themes that applied to each RQ. The three themes for each (nine total) provide comprehensive answers to each RQ. The codes and subsequent themes became apparent after several interviews. However, the research continued until 15 participants were interviewed, and the responses transcribed and coded to achieve data saturation (Patton, 2021; Saldana, 2021).

The 15 Hispanic female police officers are motivated to become and remain in the police force in Minnesota by pay, positive police contact, and serving a purpose. Barriers were the lack of guidance, negative police contact, and the inherently difficult task of entering a profession with limited availability. Facilitators for entering and remaining in law enforcement were their background, education, as well as family, friends, and police agency support. Interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore the motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers in Minnesota by interviewing Hispanic females in law enforcement. Hispanic females who were already active police officers were purposely selected to provide information based on their lived experiences regarding motivators, barriers, and facilitators. This study is important for police-community relations. The more representative police agencies are of the community they serve, the better the experience between citizens and police officers will be. This study was important as there is a positive correlation between female police officers and decreased use of force incidents. Even so, Hispanic females are routinely being passed over for police officer positions.

A key finding of this study was that Hispanic females have similar motivators, barriers, and facilitators to other minorities in becoming police officers (Lyles, 2020). However, they differ in areas not relevant to all other minority groups, such as lacking proper immigration documentation. Minorities born in the United States do not face these challenges as they are US citizens. However, Hispanic females who immigrate to this country often require their parents to act on their behalf to obtain citizenship. Otherwise, Hispanic females born outside the United States whose parents do not initiate legal action when they are young must wait for proper immigration documentation to obtain a position as a law enforcement officer.

Pay, police contact, and purpose are motivators for Hispanic females to become police officers. Although it can be assumed that most people are motivated by adequate

pay and having a purpose, the importance and application of these motivators were unique for the Hispanic female officers interviewed in this study. For example, pay was routinely discussed in the context of being able to afford childcare or attorney's fees associated with becoming US citizens. Police departments that do not pay as much as others deter Hispanic female applicants, as they need money for childcare or other related child expenses as they are culturally expected to care for their children.

Most Hispanic females who had children were full-time single parents. According to the participants, their male counterparts did not have the same challenges or social expectations of caring for children full-time. The officers in this study also discussed pay as a means to obtain additional education in law enforcement to level the playing field due to the saturation of applicants for available positions in a White male-dominated field.

To be hired in most professions, the employer is not interested in the occurrence or frequency of police contact. The Hispanic females in this study feared this contact would be negative, leading to criminal charges based on stories they heard from others or personal observations of police interactions with the Hispanic community. Therefore, Hispanic females will go out of their way to avoid all police contact. Avoiding contact places Hispanic females in a position where they may need police assistance but will not ask for it for fear of repercussions or the inability to gain future employment.

A lack of guidance, police contact, and the intricacies associated with getting and maintaining a police officer position proved to be barriers for Hispanic females in this study. The participants mentioned that a lack of proper guidance from parents, the

community, the police department, and other family members made it difficult to focus on their law enforcement careers. However, those with proper support viewed guidance from parents, the community, the police department, and other family members as contributing factors for entering law enforcement.

The Hispanic females in this study found that the absence of a criminal record, a higher level of education than their White male counterparts, and the proper physical and emotional support from their families significantly improved their ability to become police officers. Individuals in Minnesota may only need a 2-year college degree to be hired as police officers; however, several participants believed they needed a higher level of education (a 4-year degree) to be considered equal to White males who only had a 2-year degree. I observed that facilitators are strongly connected to motivators.

In this study, I observed that the opposite of what was mentioned as a motivator could be a barrier and vice-versa for Hispanic females to become police officers. For example, several Hispanic females mentioned fearing police contact while pursuing a law enforcement career. Other Hispanic females, however, mentioned seeking positive police contact to improve their chances of obtaining employment. Some participants feared negative police contact while also seeking positive police contact. Most Hispanic females in this study avoided police contact unless it was in the context of a group event and their identity was not known to the police officer.

Interpretation of the Findings

This study supports Naraidoo and Sobhee's (2021) findings concerning individuals' perceptions of government services. Naraidoo and Sobhee demonstrated that

an individual's perception of one government branch might spill into another. Hispanic females in the current research mentioned how contact with the police could be a motivator or a barrier to becoming police officers. Specifically, negative police contact is a barrier for Hispanic females, while positive contact is a motivator.

The current study supports Nedergaard's (2019) research. Nedergaard explored how experiences with a type of government service in one political subdivision are applied to the political subdivision where the person resides. It does not matter where the negative or positive police contact occurred. Once a Hispanic female has a negative or positive police contact, that contact remains a lived experience, and their views of that police contact are applied to all police officers. Therefore, the positive or negative police experience motivates or creates a barrier for Hispanic females to become police officers and is not necessarily tied to where they live or the department seeking to hire them.

This study's findings also confirm Maple and Keibell's (2021) study concerning PSM, which showed that PSM was not the leading factor for those entering police service. The data in the current study indicated that self-purpose or other types of purpose were motivators for Hispanic females to become police officers. Public service alone was not a motivator for Hispanic females to become police officers, which further supports findings by Steen et al. (2019). However, the desire to be part of the profession was mentioned as a motivator, thus supporting White's (2001) research.

Huz and McAdams's (2016) indicated that Hispanic females entered the police profession because they knew how strong interpersonal connections were based on family members or friends who were in law enforcement. Furthermore, some Hispanic

females felt obligated to stay with a particular police agency based on the interpersonal relationship they had with coworkers regardless of the working conditions or pay for their service. The data collected in this current study showed a strong interpersonal connection among police officers based on the profession and not race or background.

Levi's (1990) research concerning what candidates experience on the job was also supported by the current study. Several participants discussed struggling during the police academy and were unprepared for what they encountered. Additionally, Hispanic females in this study confirmed that the profession, responding to calls, and doing police work, was psychologically draining. The psychological stress could become severe enough that some stated they would leave the force if it were not for a motivator or facilitator helping them overcome this barrier.

Hispanic females in this study mentioned that their schedules and police culture were stressors and barriers to becoming and staying in the profession. The long hours and overnight shifts in combination with being alienated, at times, by other peers make it difficult for Hispanic females to stay in law enforcement. This study confirms Violanti's (2014) research concerning job content stressors. The findings also support McCanlies et al. (2014) regarding job context.

This study further aligns with Violanti et al. (2017) concerning how the public treats police officers and how this affects Hispanic females' desire to enter and remain in the profession. Violanti et al. discussed how those entering the field need emotional support. In the current study, the participants provided information substantiating the need for emotional and physical support. Emotional support, physical support, or both

were significant facilitators of Hispanic females' decision to enter and stay in the police profession. However, lacking these supports creates a barrier to becoming police officers.

Radojičić and Čvorović (2020) found that police recruits did not require extensive training and education to obtain employment. Hispanic females in the current study provided information that confirmed these findings. The participants mentioned additional education as a facilitator to becoming a police officer. Because minimal education is needed to enter the field, the Hispanic females indicated that a higher level of education is a predictor of how fast one can obtain police employment.

The current study does not support the findings of Linos and Riesch (2020) and Linos (2018). Linos and Riesch found that individuals were not as interested in government employment as they were decades ago. Linos also noted that the number of people pursuing public service has declined. Hispanic females in this study often mentioned that they had difficulty finding employment as police officers. The data in this study showed that the participants actively sought employment as police officers but often were not offered a position.

Mosher (1982) discussed passive and active representation in bureaucracies, noting that perceived acceptance leads to real acceptance. Passive and active representation creates a perceived or factual difference in those employed by the bureaucracy. Hispanic females in this study routinely mentioned that police work is male-dominated, and police departments hire males as police recruits. The participants provided information that indicates that passive representation was actively sought by

police agencies. However, the participants did not provide information they felt would pertain to their feeling actively represented by their police department.

Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of this study was obtaining the number of participants necessary to reach data saturation. Although 15 Hispanic female police officers participated in this study as initially proposed, the inclusion criteria regarding years of service had to be expanded. Originally, I sought participants who had joined the police force within the past 5 years; however, a limited number of Hispanic females meeting this requirement responded to my invitation to be part of this research. Therefore, I expanded the criteria to include those with any number of years of service.

Trustworthiness was maintained as I obtained data from active police officers in Minnesota. Although the study was expanded to Hispanic females in law enforcement with any amount of experience, only active Hispanic female police officers were interviewed. The trustworthiness of this study would have been limited if the original criterion of 5 years of experience had been left in place. Therefore, the limitations to trustworthiness were overcome by expanding the years of service to obtain additional Hispanic female participants.

Recommendations

Further research is needed to confirm or disconfirm the findings with statistical significance using quantitative methodology. This study was qualitative and provided the foundation on which additional research can be completed. The primary limitation was the number of participants, and future studies are recommended that include a larger

sample size to gain a broader view of Hispanic females' motivators, barriers, and facilitators in becoming police officers. Future studies are recommended to assess if Hispanic females are passive or actively represented in police departments across Minnesota. The results of those studies may indicate whether Hispanic females feel a sense of belonging to their police departments (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011).

The association Hispanic females make with police officers based on nonpolice services should also be studied (Naraidoo & Sobhee, 2021). For example, there may be no connection between a Hispanic female receiving poor medical attention from a municipal ambulance service and the perception linked to bad police service (Nedergaard, 2019). The Hispanic females in this study did not provide enough data concerning the feeling of belonging to their community and its correlation to wanting to serve their community in a police capacity. Steen et al. (2019) mentioned that people want to serve the community in which they reside, but this study does not make the connection between Hispanic females and service to their community. Further research should be conducted concerning job content and job context as a stressor for Hispanic females, which may lead to an early departure from service (McCanlies et al., 2014; Violanti et al., 2017).

Implications

Policies are needed to ensure that equity is achieved among the ranks of police agencies. Police agencies are not representative of the community they operate, which impacts police-community relationships. This research can create positive social change using the data collected from Hispanic female police officers for policy makers and other

stakeholders to make improvements to their respective police agency policies. This study identified nine themes that may be useful to consider in recruiting and retaining Hispanic females.

The positive social change that can be achieved by changing hiring and retention policies targeting Hispanic females benefits them, their families, the organization where they work, and the community. It has previously been discussed that having females in police ranks is correlated with less use of force (Hoffman & Hickey, 2005), which results in less liability. Additionally, the community views less use of force as good police work, creating better police-community relations. Hispanic females and their families will also benefit by obtaining government employment that guarantees a certain income level and job stability.

Based on the data obtained during this research, police departments in Minnesota are attempting to diversify their workforce. This attempt reflects Mosher's (1982) representative bureaucracy theory concerning passive representation. However, police agencies are failing to achieve active representation regarding Hispanic females.

The Hispanic female officers in this study mentioned having to wait extensively to obtain a position in law enforcement. There is not a lack of Hispanic female applicants; instead, they are being passed over for police officer positions. Although police agencies do not target Hispanic females for promotions, they actively attempt to move up the ranks to serve the community better. Based on the data in this study, Hispanic females are making an effort to encourage those in the profession to promote officers within the field,

but this has not happened. Therefore, police agencies need to change how they hire and retain officers to allow more Hispanic females to enter the field.

It is recommended that police agencies look at the motivators, barriers, and facilitators for Hispanic females to become police officers. By properly targeting them and providing the support needed, police departments will be better able to diversify the force and promote Hispanic females within their ranks. Once there is an increase in the number of Hispanic females hired and promoted, true active representation can be achieved. Many issues faced by police departments and the Hispanic community can be minimized if police departments tilt the scales concerning what they value in a candidate to include Hispanic females and what they value.

Police departments in Minnesota must make a conscious effort to change hiring and retention policies. Those policies must conform to what Hispanic female candidates want and need if they wish to move from passive to active representation. Changing policies to increase diversity in the police force can only lead to better police-community relations. Such improvement to police-community relations will likely lead to better established organizational legitimacy and increase public trust.

Conclusion

Previous studies provided information that new generations are less likely to seek public service employment (Linos, 2018; Linos & Riesch, 2020) Linos (2018). The data discussed in the literature review suggested that government entities do not have enough job applicants. This study's findings suggest this is not the case based on the Hispanic females' experiences and journeys to becoming police officers. Hispanic females in

Minnesota may have had a difficult time obtaining employment in law enforcement based on the data obtained from the participants in this research. The Hispanic females also indicated they are hired and retained in law enforcement at a much lower rate than males.

The combination of being a minority (e.g., Hispanic) and female exacerbates the hardship of attempting to enter law enforcement. Prior research suggested that public entities do not have enough applicants; however, this does not align with the fact that many Hispanic females apply and possibly wait years before being offered a police officer position. This study provides information that indicates Hispanic females are passed over for employment even if they have significant motivators and facilitators in contrast to barriers. The current processes, policies, and procedures create an environment where Hispanic females have difficulty obtaining employment in law enforcement.

Police departments in Minnesota must review the processes used to attract Hispanic females to apply to their departments. However, police departments cannot encourage Hispanic female candidates to apply and refuse to extend them a job offer because of a policy or procedure in place. Police departments must create or update existing hiring and retention policies tailored to their individual departmental needs. They must also consider Hispanic females if they wish to hire and retain them. Failing to change current policies will leave minority applicants behind. Without an active change in perception and policy, police departments will be unable to move from passive to active representation, missing out on creating stronger organizational legitimacy and increasing public trust.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Tell me about your upbringing.
3. Tell me about your family.
4. Tell me about support structures as they relate to law enforcement.
5. Tell me about your education.
6. Tell me more about your educational journey.
7. Tell me about the experience you had with the police before becoming a police officer.
8. Tell me about your family and their contacts with the police prior to becoming a police officer.
9. Tell me about anecdotal stories you heard about the police before becoming a police officer.
10. Tell me what motivated you to become a police officer
11. Tell me what motivates you to stay in law enforcement.
12. Tell me more about an experience you had that motivated you to become a police officer.
13. Tell me more about experiences that motivate you to stay in law enforcement.
14. Tell me what made it hard for you to become a police officer.
15. Tell me what makes it hard for you to stay in law enforcement.
16. Tell me more about experiences that made it hard for you to become a police officer.
17. Tell me more about experiences that make it hard for you to stay in law enforcement.
18. Tell me what made it easy for you to become a police officer.
19. Tell me what makes it easy for you to stay in law enforcement.
20. Tell me more about experiences that made it easy for you to become a police officer
21. Tell me more about an experience that makes it easy for you to stay in law enforcement.
22. Tell me how the recent high-profile police incidents affected your decision to enter law enforcement.
23. Tell me how the recent high-profile police incidents affected your decisions to stay in law enforcement.
24. Tell me about the way your police agency treats you.
25. Tell me more about how you feel about being represented in your police department compared to the community you police.
26. Tell me more about how the number of Hispanic females in your police department changes the way your police department views Hispanic female police officers.

27. What makes you feel appreciated by your police department?
28. What can police agencies do to increase the number of Hispanic females in their agency?
29. What can police agencies do to ensure you stay with them?
30. What would you like future Hispanic females to know that desire to enter law enforcement or are currently in law enforcement?

Appendix B: Letter to Participant and Organizations

Invitation to Participate in Research

Good morning,

My name is Rey Caban. I am a former police officer with the city of [REDACTED]. Now, I am a social scientist hoping to look for answers to questions not previously studied and published in scientific journals. I am conducting research that will be published to improve how police departments hire and retain Hispanic females. I have been working with the NLPOA VP, [REDACTED], for several months and received your contact information from her. I have attached to this email the official study informed consent as required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Please look at the informed consent to better assist you in deciding if you are willing to participate. I will be more than happy to discuss this with you and the confidentiality that goes along with it. Only you and I know about our communication. You can email me back, text, or call me at [REDACTED].

You are invited to participate in an interview for research concerning *Motivators, Barriers, and Facilitators for Hispanic Females to Become Police Officers*. In this discussion, I seek to obtain data regarding your personal experiences getting into law enforcement and reasons for staying or leaving. I request that you permit me to conduct an audio-recorded interview with you. The discussion will be digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed. The interview transcript will be analyzed to extract rich, descriptive data of your journey to becoming and/or leaving law enforcement.

The data obtained will be combined with other participants' data. Such data will be analyzed and published for those seeking a better way to recruit and retain Hispanic females. Per institutional policy, the raw data will be maintained for 5 years. However, the published dissertation will be public but will not have any publicly identifiable information.

You must know that only you and the researcher will know where the data came from (i.e., specific participant). Nobody is entitled to the participant list. If you want to talk privately about this study, benefits, or anything all, you can electronically message me at [REDACTED] or call [REDACTED]. Please share any questions or concerns you may have. Finally, please pass this invitation along to other Hispanic police officers or recently separated officers. Please let me know if you have questions, when you are available to be interviewed via Zoom or if you want me to remove you from my distribution list.

Sincerely,

Rey Caban

Appendix C: Official Invitation

Dear prospective participants,

You are invited to participate in an interview for research concerning *Motivators, Barriers, and Facilitators for Hispanic Females to Become Police Officers*. In this discussion, I seek to obtain data regarding your personal experiences getting into law enforcement and reasons for staying or leaving. I request that you permit me to conduct an audio-recorded interview with you. The discussion will be digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed. The interview transcript will be analyzed to extract rich, descriptive data of your journey to becoming and/or leaving law enforcement.

The data obtained will be combined with other participants' data. Such data will be analyzed and published for those seeking a better way to recruit and retain Hispanic females. Per institutional policy, the raw data will be maintained for 5 years. However, the published dissertation will be public but will not have any publicly identifiable information.

You must know that only you and the researcher will know where the data came from (i.e., specific participant). Nobody is entitled to the participant list. If you want to talk privately about this study, benefits, or anything at all, you can electronically message me at [REDACTED] call [REDACTED]. Please share any questions or concerns you may have. Finally, please pass this invitation along to other Hispanic police officers or recently separated officers.

Sincerely,

Rey Caban