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Performance of Military Veterans in Law Enforcement Careers at a Midwest Law Enforcement Agency

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Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

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Michael T. O'Neill

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

Performance of Military Veterans in Law Enforcement Careers at a Midwest Law

Enforcement Agency

by

Michael T. O'Neill

MBA, Columbia Southern University, 2012

BGS, Columbia College, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

February 2024

Abstract

Law enforcement is a popular career choice for military veterans, and law enforcement agencies often recruit directly from military personnel transitioning into civilian life. Military veterans also face potential challenges in their civilian careers due to negative effects from military or combat experience. The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the perceptions of the effectiveness of military veterans in law enforcement and the challenges they face in their careers. Shernock's previous research into perceptions among law enforcement officers and supervisors regarding the effectiveness of officers with combat deployments formed the basis of the theoretical framework. A qualitative case study approach was used, employing open-ended survey questions and interviews with officers and leaders at a medium-sized law enforcement agency to collect data on the perceptions of fellow officers and supervisors and issues that military veterans report facing in their law enforcement careers. The results indicated generally positive perceptions of military experience for law enforcement officers and that military experience, even without combat experience, provides an overall benefit to law enforcement officers. Positive traits identified included discipline, tactics, leadership, task orientation, and calm under stress. Challenges were identified, particularly for officers who continue to serve and struggle with the demands of two careers. Potential implications for positive social change include informing law enforcement leaders of the capabilities and challenges faced by military veterans, which can help law enforcement agencies provide better service to their community and improve public safety.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, John and Penny.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my wife, Barb, for all her support and proofreading.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Background of the Study

Scholars have produced conflicting arguments on the value of military experience in law enforcement. Ivie and Garland (2011) claimed there is a lack of evidence that military experience makes an officer better suited to police work (p. 52). Sanders (2010) found mixed opinions about the value of military experience among police chiefs. Others, such as Johnson (1998) and Matthies (2011), have indicated that military experience provides an advantage at least in the recruitment and hiring process. The issues with military experience have often been limited to discussions about posttraumatic stress (MacGregor et al., 2009; Meffert et al., 2008) without differentiating between the causes of stress from military or police experiences.

Although scholarly studies seem to be lacking on the effects of military service in policing, law enforcement leaders seem to recognize the importance of being aware of military experience within their ranks. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) has published papers on the reintegration of returning military service members. Many of the same concerns could apply to any prior military service member, including those new to the role of law enforcement.

There are a number of studies in which researchers focus on military experience as related to law enforcement careers, primarily used for the purposes of recruitment efforts. There are far fewer studies that have been focused on the effects of military service in law enforcement, both for combat and noncombat veterans. With this study, I sought to help fill that gap by addressing perceptions of law enforcement members at

every level from varied backgrounds both with and without military service experience. Finding and defining the perceptions of law enforcement members can help law enforcement leaders and individuals with military experience find the best fit in the career field for their experiences and skills. By vetting out these perceptions, organizational leadership can benefit from a greater knowledge of their staff, can more effectively assist the veterans in their organizations, and can also consider both the benefits and challenges that accompany having military veterans as part of their organizations. Using this research to place military veterans into the most appropriate positions within a law enforcement agency can also help mitigate public concern that law enforcement as a whole is too aggressive and too militarized.

By gaining an understanding of the perception of military experience on law enforcement officers, administrators and leaders in law enforcement organizations may get to know the individuals in their organizations better by gaining a more thorough understanding of their knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience. This familiarity could assist when placing individuals into certain roles within a law enforcement organization, where some members may be better suited to community-building efforts working directly with the public and others for more tactical roles, including enforcement teams and investigative efforts. An individual will perform better in a role to which they are best suited, but another possible unrecognized benefit is that of addressing and possibly changing public perception of a law enforcement agency.

Problem Statement

There is an assumed connection between prior military service in members of law enforcement compared to members of law enforcement without this prior service and experience. Due to the limited research on this connection, this research will help better explain what that correlation is and how it affects jobs in law enforcement, positively or negatively. Civilian law enforcement agencies recruit new officers in a variety of different ways, and some choose to focus their recruiting efforts on individuals with military experience. Matthies (2011) and Toch (2008) noted many similarities between law enforcement and military organizations, such as their function, chain of command, and required skills. White et al. (2010) considered that military experience may be a factor in the motivation of individuals to enter into law enforcement. However, not all law enforcement leaders agree with the value of military experience. Sanders (2010) noted mixed results when interviewing police chiefs to determine the characteristics of a good police officer. Even if military experience is an advantage in recruiting potential officers, further research is needed to understand what differences might exist between officers with prior military service and those without. Where there are differences, there may be positions within the field of law enforcement that are a better fit for their experiences. When there are negative aspects to military experience, law enforcement leaders need to understand those issues so they can mitigate them.

Shernock (2017) acknowledged there has been very little recent research on the effects of military service in law enforcement. Shernock's focus on the effects of combat deployment shed some light on the issue but did not address the correlation between

military veterans and their nonveteran counterparts. Further research is needed on the effects of military service to understand the military veteran's role in law enforcement and to account for concerns regarding the predisposition for military tactics in policing. Researchers could focus on all military (combat and noncombat) veterans to study whether military training and experience offer similar positive effects in the field of policing. Law enforcement leaders need to understand how to best utilize the skills of these veterans while learning how to cope with the issues that may accompany them.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of which skills improve the effectiveness of military veterans in law enforcement and what challenges they face in their careers. Developing a better understanding can assist law enforcement leaders in managing military veterans and can improve their service to the community. One way to develop this understanding is to compare military veterans with their nonveteran counterparts in the field and to analyze the perceptions of individuals within the organization. This will help discover if differences exist between those officers, and if so, what the positive and negative implications are. Discovering these differences can provide a better understanding of the skills and abilities that military veterans tend to bring with them, along with the problems and issues they face.

Research Questions

The primary research question guiding this study is: How does military experience affect the performance of law enforcement officers? From this, the following specific research questions were developed:

RQ1: How does prior military service affect the performance of law enforcement officers, as measured by the perceptions of fellow officers and supervisors?

RQ2: How does prior military service affect the effectiveness of military veterans working in law enforcement, as measured by the perceptions of those officers who self-report having military experience?

RQ3: What issues have military veterans found themselves facing once they transition into a law enforcement career?

Theoretical Framework

Shernock's (2017) study formed the basis of the theoretical framework for this research. Shernock studied the perception of law enforcement officers and supervisors regarding the effectiveness of officers with combat deployments. Shernock considered 18 dimensions related to policing and found that the positive effects of combat experience outweighed the perceived negative effects. Shernock theorized that combat veterans offer skills and abilities to law enforcement agencies, and agencies should focus on using the skills and experiences of combat veterans to their advantage. Shernock's findings mirrored that of a previous IACP study that noted that military veterans bring both a set of useful skills and potential issues to deal with, but Shernock emphasized that the positive effects outweigh the negative effects for combat veterans. However, not all military veterans have served in combat deployments, and a smaller percentage of those who deployed have seen actual combat. Focusing on both combat and noncombat military veterans allowed me to study whether military training and experience offer similar positive effects in the field of policing. Further research is needed to help law

enforcement leaders understand how to best utilize the skills of these veterans while learning how to cope with the issues that may accompany them.

Shernock (2017) formed the theoretical base for this research, but his concentration on the effects of combat deployment led to further questions as to how closely that correlates to overall military experience. If, as Shernock theorized, combat veterans bring positive experiences that are useful to law enforcement, does this also apply to some extent to military experience overall? This would be useful to study because of the wide range of experiences among military personnel. The United States has been involved in armed conflict continuously since 2001, but not all American forces have served in a combat deployment. For those who have, the experience can vary tremendously. An infantry soldier serving multiple deployments will probably report vastly different experiences from a sailor serving on a large surface warfare vessel or an Air Force aircraft mechanic. Studying the effects of combat deployment generalizes these experiences, possibly to the point that the results may be similar to the overall effects of military service with or without combat deployment.

Shernock's study was based on a quantitative survey, which allowed respondents to rate the effects of combat deployment across numerous categories. Further qualitative research can dig deeper into an understanding of these effects by considering the perceptions of officers and supervisors. Research questions have been designed to delve into these perceptions and consider how they affect the organization. Shernock (2017) also identified only minor negative effects of combat deployment but noted there may be need for reintegration into the community (p. 22). Researching the issues faced by

returning veterans can validate that aspect of Shernock's theory while also allowing an increased understanding of what can be done to reintegrate veterans more effectively.

Shernock focused on the effects of combat deployment on law enforcement officers and found that positive effects such as enhanced leadership skills, maturity, and discipline were far more likely to be seen than negative effects such as an increased suspicion of subjects based on their nationality (pp. 21–22). Shernock proposed that the risks of hiring combat veterans were low and that “agencies might also consider better utilizing the special skills, abilities, and experiences” (p. 22) of those with combat experience. Shernock also found that noncombat military veterans rated positive development to a lesser degree than combat veterans but a higher degree than nonveterans. Using Shernock's results as a theoretical base, I explored whether military veterans in general are perceived as having similar positive effects and whether there are similarities to the negative effects of their overall military experience with those of combat deployed veterans. If Shernock is correct in finding that “combat deployment should not be viewed and treated as categorically problematic” (p. 22), then military experience, with or without combat experience, would be more likely to be perceived as positive than negative.

The case study approach allowed for a more in-depth examination of the perception of military experience in law enforcement, which can delve further into the specific benefits and concerns of officers and supervisors as opposed to the quantitative survey method used to establish Shernock's findings. The main research question, whether prior military service is perceived to affect the performance of law enforcement

officers, was enhanced by also questioning whether combat experience plays a part in that perception. A qualitative approach also allowed further exploration into the potential negative effects of military experience because I interviewed officers, drawing out the specific issues they may face.

Nature of the Study

This study was qualitative in nature, and I focused on the effects of military service among law enforcement officers. Many quantitative studies have shown the statistics and numerical facts surrounding law enforcement officers with and without prior military service. Case studies from a medium-sized law enforcement agency not near a military base were included in the study to represent an average law enforcement agency.

A case study approach was used to allow a focus on a particular agency and to consider the performance of military veterans within that agency. This approach also allowed a closer look at the issues veterans face through the perspectives of their fellow officers and supervisors. This also allowed a comparison between veterans and nonveterans and a comparison of the effects of any military service with the effects of combat deployments.

I used interviews with law enforcement leaders and military veterans to provide an understanding of how military experience can be leveraged within agencies. Key leaders such as the police chief, assistant chiefs, senior commanders, and commanders were interviewed. Military veterans within the organization were interviewed to learn their perspectives. An open-ended survey of the sworn staff of each law enforcement

agency was offered to gain insight on the overall perceptions of the effects of military service among sworn personnel.

Data gathered from the interviews and surveys were organized using NVivo 14, a qualitative research software tool. This facilitated the organization of a large amount of data and provided a means to properly analyze it. Data analysis was used to create case records to further create a descriptive case study for the organization involved.

The nature of the topic was best served with a qualitative approach, which is more suited to a study of individual experiences, interactions, and personal issues. Shernock (2017) conducted the most relevant current literature on the effects of military service in policing, focusing primarily on positive and negative associations with combat deployments. Munoz (2020) examined the effects of military combat experience specifically on domestic policing use-of-force decisions. Ivie and Garland (2011) also examined the effects of military service in their study of stress and burnout in policing. Few recent scholarly articles have been found within the scope of this topic.

Patton (2002) described the benefit of qualitative findings that can “produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases” (p. 14) when compared to a quantitative approach. The use of a qualitative case study requires a “thorough, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). The use of sources such as interviews with various leaders and members of each law enforcement agency will help to delve further into the perceptions of the issues and positive factors of military experience. A *case* in a case study can be an individual, small group, or, in this instance, an organization. Shernock’s theory regarding the positive

experiences of military combat experience can be examined through each case study, tested to see if this correlates to all military experiences within this agency, and can be replicated in other agencies.

Data collected were analyzed and formed into case records. These case records were used to describe the case study within the organization as they relate to the research questions and overall theory. I examined differences in performance of law enforcement personnel both with and without prior military service as perceived by law enforcement officers at every level within their organization. All military experience was noted, with special interest given to those who also had combat experience along with their military history.

Operational Definitions

For the purposes of this study, a military veteran is any person who completed a term of service in a branch of the U.S. military, including those currently serving in a reserve section but who have completed their initial entry training. A combat veteran is a military veteran who has been deployed to a combat zone or who self-reports that they served in combat. Law enforcement members include sworn law enforcement officers with arrest authority and do not include non-sworn civilian staff of a law enforcement agency.

Assumptions

Several assumptions were made for this study. Because the study relied on surveys and interviews for the collection of data, I assumed that participants would provide honest, reliable answers. The perceptions of the participants can only be

measured if participants are truthful and cooperative. The study also relied on some measure of self-reporting when accounting for military service and prior experience, and again, any dishonesty or manipulation of the responses would invalidate the results. Also, the use of an interview method relied on my unbiased observation and recording of responses. The methodology described in Chapter 3 was used to minimize these possibilities.

Qualitative inquiry is people-oriented and requires the observation and collection of quotes and descriptions directly from the people involved without interpretive judgment (Patton, 2002, p. 26). A researcher must make assumptions regarding the data gathered and trust that these are accurate representations of each participant's beliefs and perceptions. If a researcher does not believe a participant, there is little value in the qualitative inquiry.

This study was qualitative, relying on opinions and information gathered from participants. By nature of this research method, I assumed the data provided by the study participants would be correct and dependable. Assumptions were also made that the study participants would give accurate data regarding their military service and their opinions of either their own or others' military service related to law enforcement personnel. I also assumed that I would gather the data in a neutral manner without letting personal opinions interfere with the results.

Scope

The research problem in this study addresses the correlation between law enforcement officers with military experience and those without. The specific scope of

this study was the perceived differences in performance as measured by the responses of fellow officers and supervisors. The perceptions of sworn law enforcement officers were considered through the use of surveys and interviews. The main focus of the study was on the overall performance of all military veterans in the law enforcement agency, although the perception of combat experience was also considered. I chose to focus on all military veterans because it is unlikely that civilian employers, particularly those without military experience themselves, would differentiate between combat military veterans and noncombat veterans. Furthermore, the differences in experiences in a combat deployment make it difficult to measure how much a combat deployment affects a veteran as opposed to the overall military experience.

In this study, I used a midsize law enforcement organization within a large metropolitan area in the Midwest region of the United States. This organization did not actively recruit military veterans because they are not located near active military bases and, therefore, would not have a percentage of military veterans outside the median range. The organization represents an average-sized organization with a typical ratio of veteran to nonveteran officers. This fit the criteria for typical case sampling, described by Creswell (2013) as highlighting what is considered normal or average (p. 158). Patton (2002), in his example of a study of villages in developing nations, noted that the study illuminates key issues that should be considered in any project aimed at those same type of villages (p. 236). In this case study, I used a typical law enforcement organization to help understand military veterans working for other typical law enforcement

organizations. Therefore, the sampling strategy used was a combination sampling strategy consisting of both a convenience sample and a typical case sampling strategy.

Quantitative inquiry puts more emphasis on the sample size, considering standard error and confidence intervals as part of a formula to determine the necessary sample size (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). Patton (2008) stated that the depth of inquiry and richness of information are more important than sample size in qualitative research. The depth and richness increase meaningfulness and validity (Patton, 2008, p. 245), and factors such as “what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (p. 244) take precedent over sample size.

Care must be taken to not assume transferability from the results of this study to all law enforcement organizations. A typical law enforcement organization may achieve similar results, but the human factor of each organization makes it likely that law enforcement agencies will see different perceptions within their specific organization. Significantly larger or smaller organizations may have different issues, and law enforcement agencies geographically located near military installations will have different experiences with military veterans. However, the research method was designed to be replicable across other organizations so that results can be compared.

Delimitations

In this study, I gathered information from a medium-sized law enforcement agency in an average metropolitan area not located near a major military base. While collecting data from a larger agency would provide more results, it would not be

representative of law enforcement in general. Law enforcement agencies located near military installations would have different survey results, as by nature their membership would contain a larger percentage of military members both with and without combat experience. The intent of this study was to represent a balanced level of military and nonmilitary law enforcement officers and administrators in an average-sized agency as participants.

Law enforcement agencies vary greatly in size and the makeup of the communities they serve. As previously noted, I used a medium-sized agency that would represent a typical law enforcement organization in the United States. Extremely large organizations, such as the police departments in New York, Los Angeles, or Chicago, would have allowed the study a greater population but may not represent the wider experiences of other agencies. Law enforcement agencies located near major military installations, such as Fayetteville outside of Fort Bragg, North Carolina, could have skewed the results when compared to most other law enforcement agencies. Therefore, these agencies were not considered in this study.

Although Shernock (2017) focused on the consequence of combat deployment, I did not attempt to differentiate combat veterans from all military veterans. There are several reasons for this. The experiences of deployment to a combat zone can vary greatly depending on the area, type of duty, situations an individual encounters, and the length of time spent deployed. Comparing and contrasting the consequences of every possible experience would be impossible. However, most military veterans share similar experiences in the training, discipline, and structure that military service brings.

Therefore, in this study, I focused on the consequences of military experience with less emphasis on specific situations veterans may have encountered during their military service.

Shernock theorized that the positive effects of combat experience greatly outweigh any negative effects for law enforcement officers. By developing this framework further, I attempted to understand whether there is a positive carryover to all military veterans. Shernock (2017) also suggested that law enforcement agencies should implement ways to utilize the skills and experience of combat veterans (p. 22), but this remains a topic for future study. The study indicated a carryover of Shernock's results to all military veterans, supporting Shernock's recommendations.

Limitations

This study was limited to a single medium-sized law enforcement agency in an average-sized metropolitan area in the United States. The results cannot be assumed to be identical at every law enforcement agency across the United States. In this study, I focused on several questions to gain insight into the perceptions of the effect of military experience on law enforcement; however, the study cannot answer all questions related to this topic. Because this study relied on voluntary participation, the results may also be less than a perfect representation of perceptions.

This study was not conducted in an attempt to answer all questions about the performance of military veterans in law enforcement. The research was limited to a single law enforcement organization. The results of any study cannot be generalized to the entire law enforcement population nationwide. Similar results may not be achieved at

every law enforcement organization. Overgeneralization is a potential concern if an attempt is made to extrapolate the results to all law enforcement personnel.

A limitation of this study was the need for voluntary participation. I assumed the participation of the leadership of an organization as well as the rank-and-file law enforcement officers. Survey results are most accurate with widespread participation, and the study required participation in the form of interviews with law enforcement leaders and military veterans serving in law enforcement. The survey required participation by both military veterans and nonveterans to gain reliable data on the perspectives of both groups. The reliability of data collection would have been significantly reduced if the personnel in the organization were not willing to participate.

Researcher bias is an ethical concern. I am a law enforcement officer, a combat veteran, and continue to serve in the military. I have served in the Marine Corps and Army Reserve since 1988 and have worked in law enforcement since 1995. My experiences influenced my decision to conduct this research. Every effort was made to remove my bias from this research. All research questions, data collection tools, and topics were vetted through peer review. The dissertation committee and the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) also addressed these concerns to reduce bias.

There were also ethical considerations when a researcher has a link to an organization involved in the study. If a researcher is affiliated with an organization, there can be concerns of a chance for biased responses, a perceived coercion to participate, or

possibility of retaliation. For this research, I used an organization outside the one where I work.

Confidentiality and privacy are important to many law enforcement personnel. Because this research was collected among law enforcement leaders and members at one organization, there was also concern that participants could suffer negative consequences if their responses are shared with supervisors or coworkers. Therefore, all participants provided fully informed consent, and data collection was kept anonymous and confidential whenever possible.

This study was a qualitative research study and did not attempt to generalize results across the entire population of law enforcement nationwide. I attempted to study a typical law enforcement organization in terms of size and structure that could represent the concerns of similar organizations; however, there are always differences between individual organizations. No claim has been made that the results would be the same in other law enforcement organizations, but the research was designed to be replicable so that other organizations could use similar methods to compare their results and determine whether they face similar concerns.

Every attempt was made to ensure maximum participation to improve the reliability of data collection. Participants were fully informed of the nature of the study and their responses kept anonymous whenever possible. If there was any question of anonymity, the participant was informed and provided consent.

Law enforcement officers can be categorized into three separate groups: combat veterans (those with military service that included deployment into a combat zone),

noncombat military veterans, and nonveterans. These designations may improve understanding of consequences of combat experience but may detract from the overall understanding of military experience. Also, as previously explained, it can be difficult to differentiate levels of combat experience.

This study could have considered a greater number of law enforcement agencies or larger agencies. The decision to focus on one medium-size agency constituted a purposeful sampling strategy. This focus was also a convenience sample taking into account geographical and time limitations.

Qualitative research methods do not use theory in as clear a manner as quantitative methods, where a theory is typically described and then tested over the course of the study (Creswell, 2009, p. 55). In a qualitative approach, theory might serve as the theoretical lens used by a researcher, offered at the end of the qualitative study after data have been gathered, or used in a manner similar to quantitative methods. The choice of a case study approach, which does not necessarily use theory explicitly, requires a careful analysis of data collected to determine how they fit into the theoretical model. A case study also requires the collection of a great deal of data, and the organization and analysis of data collected from qualitative interviews can be more time consuming than the analysis of quantitative data.

The selection of law enforcement agencies to participate in the study can be problematic. Practical necessity limited the study to an agency within my geographical reach. Participation required the approval of agency heads as well as the ability to access

the personnel being interviewed. I relied on participants to take time for interviews and also relied on participation in the survey to achieve reliable results.

Significance of the Study

Research on the effects of military service for law enforcement officers in a civilian setting is deficient. Looking at the whole picture, including both combat and noncombat military service, considering both the positive contributions and potential issues that come with that experience, will provide law enforcement administrators a clearer depiction of both the strengths and weaknesses that accompany military service as a background for law enforcement careers. Identifying these traits will assist these leaders in providing resources and assistance to address the issues that result from military service, as well as in deciding which particular jobs within their organizations are best suited for law enforcement personnel with and without military and combat experience. Previous research included only veterans with combat experience, but that does not account for the vast number of noncombat deployed military veterans who have valuable skills and training that could be used in law enforcement. This knowledge could grow these agencies without adding to their training costs and give a broader view of and respect for military experience within law enforcement regardless of whether it included combat experience.

Studying the performance of military veterans in law enforcement helps agencies comprehend precisely what advantages and challenges accompany military members in law enforcement. Assumptions are made about the knowledge, skills, and abilities the military provides to its members, and more assumptions are made by the public and

uninformed law enforcement personnel as to how these will either benefit or detract from law enforcement agencies. Researching and defining these skills and knowledge helps to better identify precisely what benefits and challenges military service brings to law enforcement. Once these are known, administrators can then determine the best courses of action to address the challenges and utilize the benefits to better their agencies. Agencies will benefit from finding ways to employ these skills learned from the military to improve their organizations. This will save on training costs and expose nonmilitary law enforcement personnel to different tactics and approaches that may not have been considered. This, in turn, builds better law enforcement officers, stronger departments, and more robust law enforcement organizations. All of these will be apparent to the populations surrounding these departments, which could result in better public perception of these agencies, thus improving relations between law enforcement and surrounding communities. A better understanding of exactly what effect military experience has on law enforcement officers can show the public that these agencies are making attempts to be transparent and forthright with their tactics, training, and relations within these communities.

There has been a lack of research on the effects of military service on civilian law enforcement. The IACP (2009) study was an exploratory study that identified a need for further study, including a comparison of the skills of veteran and nonveteran officers to determine how these skills can be used to benefit the organization as a whole and a need for research on the possible stigmatization of veteran officers who need assistance services (p. 47). Shernock conducted further study on the effectiveness of combat

veterans but did not compare the results to noncombat military service. The findings of this research may serve as a tool for law enforcement leaders to use to help them determine how to utilize veteran officers more effectively. Understanding the experiences, skills, and issues of military veterans will help law enforcement leaders better integrate them into the organization and will help veterans receive assistance when needed. This can lead to a more effective law enforcement organization, which can provide better services to their community.

Organizational leadership can always benefit from a greater knowledge of their staff. In the law enforcement profession, the human aspect of policing is fraught with challenges. Law enforcement leaders strive to hire officers with the best character and those who best fit the organizational culture. However, no hiring process can ensure that every recruit will meet their vision. Assumptions are often made about the background or experience of candidates.

This study of the performance of military veterans can benefit the law enforcement profession. This research can improve the understanding of the skills, experiences, and issues related to military veterans, which would allow them to be better integrated into a law enforcement organization. Law enforcement leaders utilize veterans more effectively if they understand the advantages they bring to the organization. These leaders can also find assistance for the veterans in their organization more efficiently if they understand some of the issues they may face.

Many law enforcement organizations currently face challenges of public perception. A review of media reports across the United States shows this challenge. For

example, events in Ferguson, Missouri, led some residents and community leaders to call for the dissolution of the police department (“Ferguson Must Move to Rebuild Public Trust,” 2015). In May 2015, the U.S. Justice Department launched an investigation of the Baltimore Police Department due to an erosion of public trust (Muskal, 2015).

Organizations such as Communities United for Police Reform claim that police have become too aggressive and caused the loss in public trust, even in cities where crime has dropped substantially, such as New York (“The Issue,” 2012). A Gallup poll indicated that national confidence in police was at a 22-year low (Shaw & Burch, 2015).

There were significant incidents behind the issues in both Ferguson and Baltimore, but the only way to build trust is for the entire organization to focus on providing the best possible services to their community. Personnel are the bedrock of any organization. Law enforcement leaders need to understand their personnel’s strengths, weaknesses, individual skills, and issues to build a more effective organization. Some personnel may be well suited to work in aggressive enforcement units, whereas other personnel may work better in building community relations. This will vary from individual to individual, but understanding the effects of a person’s background and experience can help a leader choose the best fit for each position. This will lead an organization to provide better service to the community, which can build trust, provide more effective law enforcement services, and create a safer and happier community.

Summary and Transition

The career field of law enforcement has traditionally appealed to military veterans transitioning into the civilian job market. The drawdown from U.S. wars in Iraq and

Afghanistan is leading to a reduction in the military and an influx of even more veterans (National Academy of Sciences, 2013). The perceived similarities between military service and law enforcement, such as the rank structure, discipline, and martial skills, often lead to the assumption that military service members are a good fit in law enforcement. However, some groups claim that law enforcement in the United States has become too militarized, and the attitudes and tactics carried over by veterans could be a contributing factor to those claims. Military veterans are sometimes also perceived as having issues with physical or mental health due to their service. There is a lack of research on the effects of military service on policing—specifically, research comparing the performance of military veterans with their counterparts.

I conducted this study to attempt to fill some of the gaps in the literature by providing an increased understanding of the effects of military service, both with and without combat experience, on law enforcement officers as measured by the perceptions of fellow officers and supervisors. I also considered the issues military veterans perceive themselves facing as they transition into a civilian role. I used a case study method to consider these perceptions within a single, midsized Midwest police department.

In Chapter 2, I present a review of current research examining the effects of military experience on policing and the perceptions of police recruiters and leaders toward the advantages and disadvantages of military veterans. In Chapter 2, I also look at research regarding the issues faced by transitioning military veterans. In Chapter 3, I detail the research methodology, data collection methods, and data analysis methods. In Chapter 4, I examine the findings of the study in detail. In Chapter 5, I provide a

discussion of the conclusions, suggestions for future research and for use of the research by law enforcement agencies, as well as implications for the impact on communities and the social value of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Military veterans bring a different array of experience with them when they transition to civilian employment. Understanding the differences with those experiences could help law enforcement organizations in determining how to make use of a veteran's skills and allow leaders to assist in the reintegration challenges faced by veterans moving into law enforcement careers. The purpose of this case study was to understand the experiences of military veterans serving in a civilian law enforcement organization and how they are perceived within the organization. This chapter contains three sections: the theoretical framework of the study and associated literature, a review of the literature relevant to the research, and a review of the literature detailing the methodology used in the study.

Literature Search Strategy

The Walden University Library was used to find literature for this review. Specific databases included the Criminal Justice database, SAGE Journals, the Military and Government Collection, and SocIndex. Google Scholar was also used to locate peer-reviewed publications. Several search terms and combinations of these terms were used: *military, police, law enforcement, veterans, combat, and militarization*. There was a limited amount of literature directly related to the performance of military veterans in law enforcement roles, but there were several relevant articles on the transition to civilian employment. The literature reviews in these articles provided some helpful leads to continue to collect information.

Theoretical Framework

Shernock's (2017) study formed the basis of the theoretical framework for this research. Shernock studied the perceptions of law enforcement officers and supervisors regarding the effectiveness of officers with combat deployments. Shernock considered 18 dimensions related to policing and found the positive effects of combat experience outweighed the perceived negative effects. Shernock theorized that combat veterans offer skills and abilities to law enforcement agencies, and agencies should focus on using the skills and experiences of combat veterans to their advantage. Shernock's findings mirrored that of a previous IACP study that noted that military veterans bring both a set of useful skills and potential issues to deal with, but Shernock emphasized that the positive effects outweigh the negative effects for combat veterans. However, not all military veterans have served in combat deployments, and a smaller percentage of those who deployed have seen actual combat. Focusing on combat and noncombat military veterans would be useful to study whether military training and experience offer similar positive effects in the field of policing. Further research is needed to help law enforcement leaders understand how to best utilize the skills of these veterans while learning how to cope with the issues that may accompany them. Shernock conducted a survey of the perceived effects of combat deployment and found the positive effects outweighed the negative. In this study, I attempted to build on that theory by considering whether military noncombat experience is also perceived as beneficial.

Shernock published two studies regarding the compatibility of combat experience with civilian law enforcement. In research published in 2017, Shernock surveyed officers

in rural New England and focused on officers' perceptions of the value of military and combat experience. That research provides the source of the theory used in this study.

Shernock's (2017) research noted that a large body of prior research addressed the positive benefits of military experience, but little was focused on the benefits to civilian law enforcement or the differences between combat and noncombat military experience. Shernock surveyed police officers with and without military experience to gather their perceptions of the effects of combat deployment. Shernock proposed this would give law enforcement leadership an accurate assessment of those effects. The theory assumed a level of accuracy or validity to officers' responses and relied on the respondents having either military combat experience or having worked closely with other officers to provide an accurate evaluation.

Shernock's framework relies on the assumption that civilian law enforcement agencies see some benefit in hiring combat veterans and military veterans. The assumption is also made that these agencies currently employ and intend to continue to hire those veterans. The research would not benefit organizations if they did not employ a significant number of veterans.

I considered several theories for this research, but I chose the perceptions of the effects of military and combat experience to consider whether the results would be replicable with police officers in different size organizations or in a different part of the country. Other choices, such as examining the performance of military veterans quantitatively by measuring complaints and commendations, have become more challenging recently as the number of data requests have increased among law

enforcement agencies, possibly creating a backlog and delayed responses. Shernock's framework also provides a more detailed insight into officers' perceptions.

In this study, I used Shernock's theory and attempted to determine if the perceptions are similar at another law enforcement organization. The findings could improve an agency's understanding of the skills and experiences of combat veterans in order to utilize them most efficiently. The study also builds on Shernock's findings by further considering the perception of noncombat military experience. There may be similarities or significant differences and an understanding of those would benefit an organization and the community.

In 2015, Shernock compared the perspectives of law enforcement officers regarding combat experience and military service. Unlike his later research, in this article Shernock focused on the militarization of policing and the two models relevant to the topic: the conventional model that considers militarism and military influence in civilian law enforcement negatively, and Cowper's (2000) model of the positive influence of the military in the field. Shernock's (2015) objective was specifically to understand the perspectives of law enforcement officers. Public opinion was not part of the research. Shernock differentiated officers with combat and noncombat military experience and considered their perspectives separately. This research method forms the framework used in the current study as both attempt to understand the perspectives of officers and the relationship between combat and noncombat experience.

A case study approach could be used to develop a theoretical model. This approach could be used to consider the issues of military veterans who have transitioned

into law enforcement careers. Once themes or issues are recognized, a theoretical model would be developed concerning the similarities between issues across the cases. Clemens and Milsom (2008) used this type of approach to develop the cognitive information processing (CIP) model for service members transitioning into civilian careers. The CIP model was designed to assist in the development of decision-making skills so that a person could determine the best career choice. A proper career choice requires an understanding of prospective careers and knowledge of one's own skills, abilities, and interests. Clemens and Milson tailored the model to military servicemembers and suggested engaging military veterans to understand their experiences and how they may apply to civilian occupations. Clemens and Milsom's study showed the benefit of a case study approach to the development of a theoretical framework and provided the impetus to use a similar approach to build upon Shernock's theory.

Ivie and Garland (2011) used a qualitative approach to study stress and burnout among civilian law enforcement officers with military experience to see if that experience made a difference. Their study was based on a survey previously conducted among officers in Baltimore, Maryland. Ivie and Garland did not define a theory related to their study, but they formed two hypotheses: (a) police officers with military experience would have less stress from critical incidents than those without and (b) police work would not cause stress and burnout for those officers. Ivie and Garland found that stress and burnout are similar among all police officers, but military experience provided officers with tools to cope with stress and critical incidents more effectively. Ivie and Garland's study lends

to the theory that military experience provides a benefit to police officers, which needs to be explored more fully.

An IACP (2009) study was an exploratory study that identified a need for further study, including a comparison of the skills of veteran and nonveteran officers in order to determine how these skills can be used to benefit the organization and a need for research on the possible stigmatization of veteran officers who need assistance services (p. 47). The IACP study noted that military veterans, whether entering law enforcement as a recruit or returning to a civilian position after a military deployment, bring both useful skills and potential issues. Military veterans entering law enforcement may begin with an advantage over their nonveteran counterparts, as their military training and experience has taught them skills valuable to law enforcement, such as firearms proficiency, tactical skills, physical fitness, discipline, and an ability to perform in stressful situations. Military veterans have noted negative effects such as difficulties integrating back into law enforcement after military service, higher levels of frustration and indifference, and a lower tolerance for nonveterans and citizen complaints (IACP, 2009, p. 33).

Hussey (2020) conducted a mixed-method study of the performance of police officers in dealing with the public. Hussey compared officers with and without military experience and determined that officers with military experience receive less complaints and more commendations. Hussey's theoretical framework used two theories: social learning theory and general strain theory.

Social learning theory considers the learning process that influences human behavior. Human beings learn by observation, imitation, and modeling. Normal behavior

and deviant behavior are both learned behaviors. Hussey related social learning theory to law enforcement by explaining that less experienced officers learn from the actions of more experienced officers and may model their behavior on those actions.

General strain theory considers the correlation between strains and how a person reacts to stimulus. A law enforcement officer faces external stressors, organizational stressors, and personal stressors. Officer interactions with the public are an external stressor, but their reaction could be based on a combination of one or all three. Hussey used both theories to consider whether officer actions are influenced by experience, learned behavior, or stressors. Hussey's study bears close similarity, and social learning theory and general strain theory could be useful in the theoretical framework of this study.

Robinson (2018) used operational-styles theory in a study of the phenomenological exploration of law enforcement officers' perspectives regarding the militarization of policing. This theory, developed by Worley (2003), claims that officer decision making is influenced by factors such as ideology and officers' self-perceptions. Robinson's study is valuable to the theoretical framework of this study. Operational-styles theory describes the value of an officer's perception of themselves, their skills and abilities, their position, and their relationship with the community. Robinson pointed out that further study of these perceptions can be valuable to law enforcement agencies to develop community policing protocols and programs and to address police legitimacy (p. 9).

Lockwood et al. (2018) conducted quantitative research on police militarization from a public perspective. The researchers utilized a phone survey of 1,005 adults conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in 2016. The survey considered demographic variables of gender, race, age, college, geographical area, political leaning, and satisfaction with the police. The authors did not define a theory for their research but hypothesized that public support for militarization depends on demographic factors such as race and political beliefs. Their findings provide a perspective on police perception from outside of law enforcement to contrast the perspectives of officers working in the field.

Munoz (2020) conducted a phenomenological study of the effect of combat experiences on civilian law enforcement use-of-force decisions. Munoz's theoretical framework was based on the dual process of automatic and controlled processing theory developed by Schneider and Shiffrin (Schneider & Chein, 2003). This theory states that a person's decisions are based on a combination of automatic, or trained, processes, and controlled analytical processes. This theory was useful in the examination of use-of-force decisions.

Munoz's study bears similarity in its attempt to understand the effect of combat experience in civilian law enforcement. Munoz focused on the specific area of use-of-force decision making. Automatic and controlled processing theory is useful in this regard. Despite similarities with Munoz's study, this study would be unable to utilize the same theoretical framework because I was attempting to understand the effect of military and combat experience from a broader perspective.

Literature Review

The military is rarely a life-long career. Most servicemembers will eventually transition to the civilian workforce, and the drawdown of the U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan has led to a higher influx of those servicemembers. The percentage of those servicemembers with combat experience is also the highest since the Vietnam War era.

Many civilian law enforcement agencies have traditionally sought out military veterans. Similarly, the field of law enforcement has attracted those veterans. A great deal of literature mentions the applicability of military experience to law enforcement. Fewer actually consider what specific attributes apply or how they affect career performance. There is also a body of research on the reintegration of combat veterans and the issues they face due to posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or psychological concerns, but very little specific to those veterans working in law enforcement.

In this study, I attempted to improve upon the current understanding of the value of military experience and skills, both combat and noncombat, to civilian law enforcement officers. I also considered the issues faced by those officers in their law enforcement careers. This knowledge should be useful to law enforcement organizations and provide a benefit to the communities that they serve.

To accomplish this, the review of the literature encompassed several areas beginning with the current research on the military skills that are valued by civilian organizations, particularly law enforcement organizations. The review made it apparent that there is a presumed benefit to military experience but a limited amount of literature

verifying that benefit or the relevance to law enforcement. Therefore, the review of the literature was expanded to examine the transition from military to civilian work as the initial entry into law enforcement and how prior experience affects that process.

Literature regarding PTSD in the military was reviewed to consider what issues carry over into civilian work. Civilian law enforcement shares similarities with the military in their increased exposure to critical incidents and potential for PTSD. There appeared to be a greater wealth of literature available regarding how the military and veteran's organizations have dealt with and assisted veterans with coping, while civilian law enforcement is only beginning to consider its impact on their officers. The review attempted to determine if military experience was a factor in the number of instances of law enforcement PTSD or in recognizing or coping with PTSD.

The review of the perception of military experience also revealed some negative perceptions. This led to a further review of the concept of militarization of policing and whether officers with military experience are a cause or effect of militarized law enforcement organizations. The review attempted to separate the value of military experience from that of combat experience. Most literature either researched overall military experience or the impact of combat. Overall, the review of the literature showed that it would be useful to study the perception of both combat and noncombat veterans in law enforcement.

Several themes were apparent in the literature. A large amount of literature mentioned the perceived positive value of military experience, both in civilian law enforcement and in the general workplace. Civilian law enforcement agencies have

traditionally sought out military veterans, and a review of the literature shows several studies that have considered what attributes are important to these employers and whether those attributes are present in military veterans.

There is also a growing body of literature regarding the transition from military service into civilian life. The drawdown from wars in the Middle East has led to an increased number of veterans leaving the military and seeking employment, which has spurred efforts to improve their transition and to study the challenges that they face. There is also literature exploring the initial entry into civilian law enforcement from the hiring process through the training academy, and the performance of military veterans in that initial transition has been considered.

A separate body of literature explores the militarization of domestic policing. Militarization refers to the increased use of military style equipment and tactics. Militarization is often viewed by the image of a police officer dressed in tactical gear, carrying an AR-15, and standing next to an armored vehicle. The recruitment of military veterans may be a factor in the militarization of policing, and the effects are addressed by some studies. Some literature has theorized that military veterans are a negative influence in civilian law enforcement because their prior training leads to militarization or more aggressive, forceful tactics.

A fourth theme is the prevalence and effect of PTSD, psychological or mental health issues among combat veterans, and whether these constitute potential issues. PTSD is also a concern among law enforcement officers who are exposed to critical

incidents. Literature shows that prior military, specifically combat experience, could be either an asset or a concern for law enforcement officers after a critical incident.

Positive Perceptions of Military Experience

Munoz (2020) studied the effects of prior military combat experience on law enforcement use-of-force decisions. This qualitative study interviewed military combat veterans who had transitioned to civilian law enforcement in order to understand if their experiences had an effect on their decisions. These Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans were solicited from law enforcement organizations throughout the state of California via the California Peace Officers Association.

Munoz was limited by the number of participants in his one-on-one interviews but found that use-of-force decisions were generally not affected by military combat experience. Themes that did appear, however, were that military training offered an advantage in reaction time and decision-making. Better reaction time and decision-making ability could prove advantageous despite the differences between military and civilian use-of-force criteria.

Johnson (1998) provided a quantitative study of the performance of recruits in basic law enforcement training and on their entry testing. Johnson studied the results of state exams at North Carolina community college law enforcement programs. While the focus of the study was on a wide range of experiential factors, Johnson considered military experience, military rank, and specific military police (MP) experience among those factors. The results showed little correlation between military experience and entry testing exam scores. Respondents with military experience scored slightly, but not

statistically significantly higher on the state exam, and somewhat surprisingly, higher rank servicemembers did not score as well as mid-rank ones. Respondents with former MP experience also scored slightly higher but not to a statistically significant amount.

Johnson's study looks into the perception that military experience would make a better candidate entering into civilian law enforcement. While military service was only a portion of the study, the quantitative findings contradict the common perception. The findings at least indicate that military experience has only a minimal benefit to initial entry into law enforcement.

Shernock (2017) used a qualitative survey of police officers in New England to examine how officers perceive the effects of combat experience on policing. Shernock did not limit the survey to officers with military combat experience. Officers and supervisors were surveyed to assess what effects they perceive combat experience has on policing, to include discipline, leadership, ability to analyze and react to situations, teamwork, empathy, use of force, and stress. Shernock found generally high ratings for the positive effects of combat experience and low ratings of the negative effects. These results were similar when surveying officers and supervisors without combat experience in regard to their fellow combat-experienced officers. Shernock's findings were limited to small, rural areas, and may not be comparable to policing in a major metropolitan area but suggested that the benefits of military experience outweigh the challenges.

Shernock (2015) conducted an online survey of police officers in New England to measure their perspective on the value of military and combat experience. He defined the military model of policing as the traditional model of American law enforcement

agencies utilizing a military rank hierarchy and a separation from external political influence. This research paper provided an insight into the effects of military service based on the perspectives of the officers themselves. The study bears close resemblance to Shernock's (2017) changing uniforms study and the two can be used in conjunction. The findings provide a detailed understanding of the military attributes that officers value, the differences between the perspectives of combat and noncombat military veterans, and the potential impact on their ability to manage stress and critical incidents. This research paper's theme is the positive perspectives of prior military service and provides a basis for future study.

Ivie and Garland's (2010) study of stress and burnout in policing provided insight into the value of military experience in coping. This study was relevant to all three research questions in the specific area of post-traumatic stress and the influence of military experience on stress. The authors noted that law enforcement agencies have traditionally shown a preference toward military veterans, yet there have not been studies to confirm how effective those veterans are as law enforcement officers. Two hypotheses were tested: negative situations will be less likely to lead to stress and burnout for military veterans, and police work will have no influence on stress and burnout for military veterans. Ivie and Garland conducted a quantitative study using previously compiled data from a study conducted on police stress and domestic violence in Baltimore in 1999. They found that military veterans were better able to cope with negative situations than their nonmilitary counterparts even though the sources of stress were the same across the board.

The study showed the potential positive impact of military experience for law enforcement officers, particularly when dealing with the stress of traumatic incidents. This study provides a counterpoint to the idea that military veterans could be a liability by bringing issues of post-traumatic stress with them from their prior experience. Military veterans may have learned resilience and coping skills that their counterparts did not.

Griffith et al. (2020) published an article on military reservists and veterans. The definition of a veteran can be confusing as some would correlate the title with combat experience or with a specific period of time, but the authors use the wider definition of anyone who previously served in the military. Reservists are defined as those serving in a nation's part-time force. The article focused on the perspectives of those two groups as well as how they are viewed by the public.

According to the article, reservists sometimes face challenges because of their dual careers and time spent away from their civilian employment. However, military veterans are sought after by civilian employers for their training, experience, maturity, ability to follow direction, and leadership. Their military occupations often transfer directly to civilian fields.

Hussey (2020) published a study comparing law enforcement officers with and without military experience. Hussey looked at the use-of-force complaints and complaints of unprofessional conduct to consider whether military experience had a positive or negative influence. Hussey utilized a mixed method study and asked eight research questions regarding the likelihood of use of force and unprofessional behavior complaints for both police officers and supervisors and the perception of police

supervisors toward the value of military experience in their officers. The study was conducted with the Broward County Sheriff's Office, the Jacksonville County Sheriff's Office, and the Orlando Police Department. The study found that police officers with military experience were less likely to receive complaints for use of force or unprofessional conduct. Supervisors perceived their police officers with military experience to be more mature, responsible, and better leaders but to have more difficulties dealing with civilians because of a rigidity in their interaction.

Hussey provided a very in-depth study of three police organizations. The primary theme became the positive benefits of military service. He addressed the potential issues of PTSD and psychological concerns but found a wide array of positive benefits for military experience. His study was focused on the perception of supervisors and the data regarding officer complaints, so it did not directly differentiate combat and noncombat experience for military veterans. In addition to addressing the value of prior military service, Hussey's results were valuable to the understanding of combat experience and the issues faced once military servicemembers are transitioned into civilian law enforcement as well.

IACP (2009) considered the skills that military veterans bring to law enforcement, as well as the challenges that they face. They also noted that combat veterans tend to return to law enforcement roles with less patience for citizen complaints, less trust of nonveterans and have concerns about seeking help for issues such as PTSD. Military veterans, including those returning to their civilian duties after a deployment as well as new recruits, leave the military with useful skills and experience but also with potential

concerns. Military veterans who are newly transitioning into law enforcement careers may start out with some advantage when compared to their nonveteran counterparts, as their military service has provided them with skills that are also valued by law enforcement organizations. The IACP identified some of these skills, such as discipline, weapons proficiency, tactical training, a higher level of physical fitness, and experience performing under stressful situations. However, the study also noted that veterans may return with some transition issues. Military veterans have reported a change in their perspective based on their military service, in areas such as their tolerance for citizen complaints, empathy for others, and trust of nonveterans (IACP, 2009, p. 33).

Themes covering the positive and negative aspects of military service are discussed in the IACP report. The transition into law enforcement is also covered in the report. All three research questions are discussed within this report, which served as the initial identification of the need for further research in this area.

Hajjar (2014) examined the modern American military culture. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan required a substantial change in military capabilities in order to take on more unconventional missions. This included an increased amount of police work within those countries, caused a blending of the roles of the military and police which required the U.S. military to learn police skills and softer tactics while dealing with noncombatants and civilians in the region. The modern servicemember had to become both a warrior and a peacekeeper. This evolution of the military role made civilian law enforcement appear as the obvious post-military career for many veterans. By the same

token, the skills and accountability learned by military veterans made them appealing to civilian law enforcement agencies.

Hartley et al. (2013) conducted a study analyzing the differences in stress and coping abilities for civilian law enforcement officers with prior military experience and those without. They categorized officers with military experience, military combat experience, and no military experience. The study was conducted on a sample of 452 officers between 2004 and 2009.

The study found that non-military officers experienced more stressors and had higher stress levels than military veterans (either with or without combat experience). However, combat veterans were less capable of coping with stressful events when they occurred. The authors speculated that this result could be due to the combat veterans having confidence in their ability to handle stress and a belief that they do not need to cope or confront the stressor.

The themes of PTSD/psychological issues from military experience and the positive value of military experience are brought up by this research. The findings show a greater emphasis on the positive benefits of military and combat experience. The study relates to the first two research questions by showing these benefits, but also addresses the potential issue of coping that could be encountered in a law enforcement role.

Klein et al. (2015) attempted to understand how military and police officers can have positive interactions with civilians in order to create trust and legitimacy. They discussed the traditional warrior mindset of the military but offered that the military is being increasingly used in unconventional roles that are similar to domestic law

enforcement and that require softer, more persuasive tactics to gain compliance. The study surveyed 17 police officers and 24 military personnel regarding incidents or encounters they had with civilians in the course of their duties. The authors discussed the importance of gaining trust in order to be successful in cooperation and reduced hostility. The framework was labeled “being a good stranger.” The study developed a list of skills which seemed to contribute to that framework. Klein et al. (2015) gave insight into the similarities between the modern military missions and civilian law enforcement and took a perspective that both groups can be more effective by developing the skills that make them *good strangers* and offered a theme of the similarities between military and law enforcement and the positive aspects of military experience.

Spiro et al. (2015) studied the long-term effects of military service on mental and physical health. The study looked beyond the visible effects of injuries from combat. Discussing mental health, the authors noted that not everyone who faces military-related stressors develops PTSD, rather that estimates range from 5% to 30% and of that group, many develop *posttraumatic growth* resulting in improved coping skills and resiliency that could be a long-term benefit. They also discussed the screening process for those entering military service which increases the likelihood that those who have served in the military have fewer pre-existing mental and physical health issues.

Spiro et al. provided a different viewpoint of the positive and negative effects of military service. They found that in many instances, those with military service have healthier outcomes than those without. This could be a factor for prospective employers

to consider and builds on the theme of the positive value of military experience as well as the theme of PTSD and mental health.

Patterson (2002) conducted a study of police officers at a mid-sized urban law enforcement organization in order to determine whether military experience had an impact on their perception of organizational and occupational stress. Patterson described the paramilitary model of law enforcement organizations and suggested that military veterans should be more comfortable with that model, leading to less perceived stress from organizational work situations. Patterson also hypothesized that military veterans would report more issues with field work dealing with citizens. The study found, however, that military veterans did not report more stress from field events, nor did they report less stress from organizational situations. The findings showed little difference between military and nonmilitary in their perception of work-related stressors in law enforcement.

The report by the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement (2012) documented the requirements for MP veterans to receive accreditation and become licensed civilian law enforcement officers in the state of Michigan. The report is useful in describing the similarities between civilian and military law enforcement training which allow a military veteran with MP experience to complete their training in a shorter period of time. The report relates to the theme of the positive value of military experience, specifically within the occupation specialty of military police. The commission also addresses the recruitment of military veterans, the 2011 act signed by President Obama which encourages the hiring of military veterans, and the preference given to them. This

could be related to militarization, despite the fact that the subject was not discussed in the report, because of the federal encouragement to hire military veterans. The study demonstrated the similarities in training and contrasting with the perception of the differences between the military and civilian law enforcement.

The IACP (2017) version three of the national consensus policy on the use of force outlined the effort to create a nationwide standard for law enforcement agencies. Since law enforcement agencies are not typically subject to federal control or required to follow IACP recommendations, the policy has been controversial. The policy paper highlighted the differences in civilian use-of-force standards and military rules of engagement. These differences could be considered a potential issue for military veterans who have to reconsider the rules that they were trained in, or for National Guard/Reserve who have to operate by different sets of rules.

Pollak et al. (2019) described the benefits of hiring military veterans. The focus was on the financial performance of businesses that hire military veterans, but the paper explored other research and documented the potential skills and attributes of military veterans. The paper found substantial advantages for businesses that hire military veterans. Pollak et al. referenced numerous studies showing that veterans outperformed their nonveteran counterparts in their civilian jobs and were recognized for their leadership ability, teamwork, resilience, work ethic, and self-discipline. These attributes are relevant to any career field.

Cowper (2000) spoke about how the military management style and chain of command is used (incorrectly, according to the author) by law enforcement agencies in

the United States. Cowper concluded that many supervisors in law enforcement use military style techniques incorrectly in their attempts to lead subordinates. Law enforcement is generally understood to be a paramilitary pursuit based on a specific “military model” of leadership and organization. This article analyzed the so-called military model in law enforcement and dispels the notion that police officers and their departments are patterned after the real military. Cooper drew on the author’s personal experience as well as on historical works and military doctrinal publications. Cowper illustrated the problems caused within policing by the false assumptions about military leadership, structure, and doctrine and then outlined the potential benefits to policing of a more correct understanding and application of valid military concepts and methodologies. Despite the problems associated with this incorrect understanding of the military model, the author suggested that law enforcement agencies should learn from military doctrine and theory in order to improve policing. The paper covers both positive and negative themes of military experience regarding the implementation of a military model at civilian agencies. Cooper does not focus on the individual but on the organization and organizational structure.

Batka and Hall (2016) discussed the transition of military veterans to the civilian work force and offered that there has been a great improvement in the programs and initiatives supporting that transition. The authors suggested areas to further improve this support. Those areas included documenting the experiences of employers with veteran employees, matching military and civilian skills, and measuring the effectiveness of

transition programs. The advantages of hiring veterans, according to the authors, is so well documented that prospective employers must now sell themselves to veterans.

Transitions From Military Service

Chappel (2008) studied the performance of new law enforcement recruits training at a traditional police academy versus one with a community policing curriculum. Chappel also considered whether recruits of different backgrounds and experience perform differently under those two curricula. Age, gender, race, education, and military experience were considered. No differentiation was made between active duty or reserve military experience, and no data was collected on combat experience. Only about 8% of the recruits had military experience. Those military recruits were more successful in both the traditional and new academies but were actually less likely to find a job in law enforcement after the academy. Chappel posited that these recruits may have been more likely to return to active duty or find jobs in other, similar fields such as corrections, explaining their lower hire rate.

The theme of performance of military veterans is addressed by this study, specifically in the initial entry training and gaining employment. The findings indicated that military veterans may be equally suited for careers in modern community-oriented policing as well as traditional law and order styles. Although the research does not consider combat experience, it does address the effects of military experience as well as the transition into civilian law enforcement.

Clemens and Milsom (2008) considered the challenges faced by enlisted service members' transition out of the military and into civilian employment. Enlisted personnel

traditionally enter, and often exit, the military without any post-high school education, so it can be important to properly capture their military work experience and understand how it can translate into civilian occupations. Their paper discussed those challenges and developed recommendations for the use of military transition resources that are offered by the federal government and many civilian organizations. They also used a case study of a servicemember who, as a military policeman, had expressed interest in a civilian law enforcement career. That servicemember described challenges not just in translating his experience, but also in dealing with the psychological effects of returning from wartime service, leaving the military, and finding himself embroiled in personal issues. The theme of transition from military to civilian life is explored in a different manner using the case study, and the study hints at challenges that could be faced by both servicemembers and employers in the realm of mental and emotional health after leaving military service.

Matthies (2011) considered recruitment and retention issues for law enforcement agencies. He used a study at one of the largest metropolitan police departments, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), to look at their recruitment program and quantify their challenges. Matthies specifically considered whether military service can be a predictor of success in both the hiring phase and early job performance. He found that military servicemembers did not have an advantage in the background/hiring process but were more likely to succeed at the academy and pass probation when compared to recruits with no military experience.

Matthies' theme follows the performance of military veterans in their initial entry and early employment. He noted the parallels between the two career fields and the fact

that many law enforcement officers continue to serve in the reserves. While not directly addressed, Matthies' choice of the LAPD, which is geographically close to a number of large military bases, may have been advantageous in providing a larger percentage of military veterans in the study. Military experience was considered from a quantitative standpoint and not based on perception. The study did not differentiate based on combat experience or consider the challenges that officers may face once they have passed probation.

Feickert (2014) prepared a report for Congress on the drawdown and restricting of the U.S. Army that began in 2012. The report addresses the decision to drastically reduce the number of Army personnel due to the anticipated withdrawal of forces from Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite the fact that the Army numbers would rise back up in following years, the impact of the drawdown had consequences for servicemembers and their transition into civilian employment. Feickert noted that the proposed reduction of 80,000 servicemembers would place a higher reliance on the National Guard and Reserve, but that those members had to balance civilian jobs with their military service. Feickert mentioned but did not go into great detail on the impact of the drawdown on the separated servicemembers. Feickert noted that there are now more resources offered to veterans for transition assistance and finding civilian employment that matches their skills. However, Feickert also noted the higher divorce and suicide rates among servicemembers.

Feickert's report addresses the theme of transition and the associated challenges. The drawdown in 2012-2014 had an adverse impact on many servicemembers and was

short lived but left many career military separated and in search of civilian employment. The performance of those veterans was not addressed by the report, but the transition of many people with military experience into the civilian job market led law enforcement agencies to consider the value of that experience and demonstrates a need for research into that perception.

Eaton (2014) conducted a qualitative research study on the transition from military to civilian life. Eaton interviewed military veterans about their military service and the process of leaving the military and entering civilian careers and civilian life. In addressing the experiences of these veterans after their transition, Eaton noted that veterans may be influenced by a warrior archetype, which forms their character and has many aspects such as confidence and integrity that appeal to civilian employers. Many veterans also feel the desire to be a protector, which can lead them to seek careers as first responders such as firefighters, law enforcement, or emergency medical technicians. Eaton noted that the warrior archetype also can bring feelings of guilt and enduring suffering which can contribute to challenges, a perception of failure because they are no longer serving, and a conflict with civilian values. Eaton's theme of transitioning challenges gleaned several positive and negative aspects of military experience. This theme noted the draw to careers such as law enforcement but did not limit the study to military veterans in those careers.

Cooper et al. (2018) studied the experiences of members of the United Kingdom military transitioning into civilian life. The cultural aspects of military life were explored along with how they adapt to civilian culture. The article discussed how some military

veterans seek employment in policing and other organizations that share a similar environment with the military, easing the veteran's adaptation to civilian life through continuity. However, the veterans also must adapt their behavior to civilian cultural norms, which may differ from the military culture that influenced them. Transition may be easier for military servicemembers that served in fields similar to civilian fields, such as clerks, but more difficult for infantry and fields outside the civilian cultural norm. The authors noted that even the transitioning military had problems identifying themselves as veterans because there are different perceptions (such as combat experience or time in service) of what defines a veteran.

Blumberg et al. (2016) conducted a study on the impact of police academy training on integrity. The public perception of police legitimacy and trust is impacted by the integrity of police officers, so the authors attempted to determine the level of integrity of police recruits and whether that level was positively or negatively impacted by their initial training. The authors found that the initial, self-reported levels were high, and that the academy did not create a significant change. The authors also considered several variables, to include military experience, for the recruits. The only data collected about military experience was on the number that did not complete training, and military experience had no effect on this. The authors noted that law enforcement agencies have a more rigorous screening process for psychological issues and personal ethics than other career fields.

Militarization of the Police

Several studies consider the perceived value of prior military service along with the negative perception by some of the militarization of police. Lockwood et al. (2018) investigated the perception of citizens regarding the militarization of civilian law enforcement. The authors surveyed 1005 individuals and measured their support for law enforcement use of military weapons and equipment. The study analyzed the differences in support between groups based on race, age, gender, education, and geographical area. The support for police militarization ranged widely in the authors' findings, with support higher among males and less educated individuals, but race was not the significant factor that the authors had hypothesized and had mixed results.

The study looks at the theme of militarization of the police, and although the military experience of officers was not directly a factor in the study, one of the recommendations from the study was that police officers should receive extensive training in the use of any military equipment that they have available. Military veterans could already have this training and may be able to share their expertise in their agency. Even though the study showed that some individuals have a negative perception of police militarization, a military background could lend to safer use of military equipment by police officers.

Moule et al. (2019) assess the support of police militarization with a view toward the public perception of legitimacy of policing. The authors argue that legitimacy is gained by being effective, fair, and transparent, and that higher legitimacy improves cooperation in law enforcement contacts with citizens. Legitimacy has also, however, led

to empowerment of policing and an increased militarization of police over the last several decades. Their study found a positive correlation between legitimacy and the perception that military equipment and training leads to increased effectiveness.

Moule et al. built on the theme of the militarization of law enforcement. Public perception can have positive and negative consequences. A high legitimacy lends to the perception that some militarization is beneficial. A low legitimacy can cause the public to believe that the use of military training and equipment will lead to a loss of civil liberty.

Above the Law (Skolnick & Fyfe, 1993) examined police brutality and excessive use of force. The book was divided into three sections, which examined instances of police brutality, possible explanations or causes of police brutality, and then looked at remedies and police reform. Skolnick and Fyfe (1993) began with the Rodney King beating as the incident that changed the public outlook towards police and showed that the country was divided between high crime urban areas and suburban, predominately white safe areas.

Skolnick and Fyfe discussed the military model of policing, noting that most police agencies use a military organizational model and that some leaders have compared the police to the military in the context of the “war on crime” or “war on drugs”. However, Skolnick and Fyfe also noted that there are key differences between the military and police. For example, police working the street, the lowest level in the police chain of command, are expected to use a great deal of discretion that would not be afforded to the lower ranks in the military. Utilizing overly rigid, military-style regulations put police officers in an awkward situation where the police regularly violate

their own rules by using discretion, which causes the rules to hinder community policing goals and essentially become irrelevant. Skolnick and Fyfe suggested that the military organizational model therefore weakens police supervision and leadership.

Balko (2013) analyzed the trend toward militarization of police forces in the United States from the 1960s to the present. Balko suggested that wars on crime and drugs led to the creation and expansion of special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams, increased use of military equipment and military tactics. Balko examined the “troops to cops” program supported by President Bill Clinton in the 1990s, noting that the program showed a belief that military and law enforcement jobs are very similar. Balko, however, stated that “there is little about military service that would make a soldier a better candidate to become a police officer...and there’s a good argument to be made that soldiers who have seen combat ought to get *extra* scrutiny before they’re given a badge and a gun” (p. 195). In his discussion about police reform, however, Balko discussed the benefit of improved command presence, verbal communication, and physical fitness as means to reduce the need for use of force. Balko also suggested that the police may be more militarized than the military (p. 335) in their tactics.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) publication *War Comes Home* (Dansky, 2014) delved deep into the subject of the militarization of policing and offered that there is a trend that “American policing has become unnecessarily and dangerously militarized” (p. 2) through the use of federal programs and funds. The publication did not limit the idea of militarization to the use of military style weapons, vehicles, or

equipment. The ACLU offered that militarization changes the mentality of law enforcement to a ‘warrior’ rather than a ‘guardian’ mentality and finds that militarization adversely and disproportionately affects people of color.

The ACLU study did not address the recruitment or hiring of military veterans. The ACLU did, however, propose that the military model of training and the combat mindset that is common with it is inappropriate for civilian law enforcement. The ACLU addressed the theme of militarization of policing and is generally the basis for most of the current arguments against the use of military equipment by law enforcement.

Balko (2013) in *Rise of the Warrior Cop* discussed his findings that military veterans tend to be more confrontational and less predisposed to a community policing approach to law enforcement. Balko also discussed the development of the SWAT team within the LAPD, leading to increased militarization of law enforcement and disproportionate effects on low income and diverse communities. Unlike the ACLU publication, Balko offers that military veterans are a disadvantage to modern law enforcement because their background and experience does not lend well to community policing and modern law enforcement. Balko addressed the theme of militarization of law enforcement and the performance of military veterans. Balko drew a connection between the two and points to the negative aspects of military experience.

Robinson (2018) provided a phenomenological study of the perspective of law enforcement officers on the subject of the militarization of policing in the United States. Robinson stated that there are several studies addressing citizen perspectives on the subject, but no research examining that of police officers. Robinson asked respondents to

consider the impact on community relations in the context of community policing at their agency. The author found that the respondents saw a need for the use of military training and equipment and did not believe that this negatively affected their relationship with the community. The respondents addressed how community policing has provided more legitimacy to their organization, which in turn has helped community members to understand the reasons for a militarized response to high-risk threats to the public. The study did not directly address military veterans in the law enforcement organizations but did address the perception that substantial training in military tactics is of value.

The theme of militarization of policing is addressed in this study. No mention is directly made of the value of military veterans. However, a conclusion can be drawn that there would be value to military experience, providing the officer with training and tactics that could be utilized and taught to others in the organization.

Wyrick (2013) provided a study on the perception of militarization of policing by the public. Wyrick defined militarization as the implantation of the military spirit into legal action (p. 7). The literature review provided a deep historical study that noted the trend toward militarization grew out of several historical events such as Columbine. Wyrick discussed alienation of police from the public over that period of time and the concern that, while there is sometimes a need for a militarized response, militarization could increase that alienation. Wyrick's study found a strong positive correlation between militarization and citizen confidence in their police, but that the more fearful the respondent was of police the more likely they were to have a negative response. Although

the results were mixed, it appeared that militarization was viewed positively in certain scenarios.

Fox et al. (2018) conducted a study on the public perception toward police militarization with a focus on how different groups or factors influence that perception. The authors considered normative, instrumental, and demographic factors to compare the level of support or opposition toward militarization among those groups. The study consisted of an online survey of 702 adults in mid-2017. The respondents with a high level of trust in police and belief in police legitimacy were most likely to support militarization but respondents throughout all the various demographic, normative and instrumental factors (for example, income levels, age, race, education) were found on both sides of the issue. The military or law enforcement experience of the respondents did not show a significant influence on their level of support for police militarization. This study did not address the value of military experience, but the finding that legitimacy and trust play an important role in the support or opposition toward militarization also suggest that a balance between community policing and militarization may be important to law enforcement agencies.

Police riots examined the history of police violence and misbehavior and attempted to focus on the factors that lead to *police riots*. Stark hypothesized that some of these factors included a deterioration of job satisfaction, training, and qualifications in previous years. Stark also believed that police are concerned with their own safety to an unreasonable degree and that their tactical response to disturbances can be the cause of confrontations and violence. The tactics that police use, according to Stark, are military

tactics that are not appropriate for these situations or for the level of police training.

According to Stark, military training is intended to suppress individuality and encourage teamwork, while police training focuses on initiative and discretion, and when police try to utilize military tactics in situations such as crowd control, they fail and cause violence because of their different focus and mindset. Stark pointed to the Detroit riots as an example of the failure of the police and National Guard to perform riot control, while Army paratroopers were able to control the situation with minimal violence.

Steidley and Ramey (2019) provided an overview on current research regarding the subject of police militarization. The authors noted the parallels between the military and law enforcement, stating that “the skills, resources, and knowledge used by the military to subdue enemies may translate into police use and management” (p. 3). They also cited studies suggesting that militarization does not reduce crime or improve officer safety. The article provided a current look at the research done on the positive and negative implications of police militarization.

Doherty (2016) discussed the militarization of civilian law enforcement and the creation of an “us versus them” attitude that arose from a warrior mindset and the blurring of the differences between the military and civilian law enforcement. Doherty offered that the use of military equipment leads officers to feel more aggressive and militaristic and can also trigger civilians. Doherty went beyond the argument against the use of military equipment and tactics and offered that the military mindset of civilian policing is an underlying issue of public trust.

Doherty suggested that community-based training could reverse the military mentality and reduce their likelihood of using force. However, he further suggested that it may not be possible to reverse a military mentality that has been enforced over several years, so the solution may require recruiting changes. Doherty suggested that agencies should not show the violent or aggressive aspects of law enforcement in their recruitment efforts but should focus on the community service aspect of the job in order to appeal to different people. The paper extends the concept of militarization to the officers and their mindset.

Silver et al. (2017) defined traditional police culture (TPC) as a “set of attitudes and values developed as coping mechanisms for police work’s unique and inherent strains that fosters distrust toward and isolation from citizens” (p. 1272). The research considers the causes of TPC as well as how it influences police interaction with the public. The authors surveyed 781 officers through email lists from the New York State Association of Chiefs of Police (NYSACOP), the National Criminal Justice Training Center (NCJTC) and the website Officer.com regarding use of force and tactics. The respondents were divided into line officers and managers, and used variables of gender, race, education, and department size. The authors found an association between TPC and officer attitudes toward use of force and procedural tactics.

Silver et al.’s (2017) study did not consider the variable of military experience. Silver, et al, mentioned that the paramilitary organizational structure of police agencies could be a factor in TPC. Prior military service could affect an officer’s endorsement of TPC and their attitude toward use-of-force tactics.

Bishopp et al. (2016) and Shane (2010) studied the role of organizational stressors in law enforcement organizations. Bishopp et al. approached from the perspective of general strain theory to explain how organizational influences led to higher police misconduct. The study used data from 1389 officers working for urban Texas police departments.

Similar to Shane, Bishopp et al. stated that the paramilitary structure of police departments leads to a more rigid ruleset and higher organizational stress. The authors' findings confirmed their belief and showed that organizational strain directly influenced misconduct, whether that was yelling at citizens or unnecessary force. The study advised organizations to attempt to reduce officer fatigue, to develop a transparent internal affairs process, and to understand organizational stress in order to reduce its impact.

Shane studied the impact of organizational stressors on police officers. Shane suggested that organizational stressors could play a larger role in work stress than occupational stressors or critical incidents. Shane conducted a survey using a convenience sample of officers from two police departments to consider officer perception of organizational and operational stress. The author noted that the military structure of most law enforcement organizations has not changed despite a claimed move to a community policing model, and this structure could lead to stress by reducing the control and discretion that officers have over their career and personal life.

Shane's study related to the theme of militarization from the perspective of the organizational structure of law enforcement agencies and the negative perception of that structure due to its impact on organizational stressors. Military experience was not

directly a consideration in this study. Instead, the military model of law enforcement was considered as a factor in organizational stressors.

Weitzer (2017) wrote about police-citizen relations and the impact of reform. Weitzer discussed events and factors that have led to a deterioration of trust and legitimacy of policing in the United States as well as reforms that have been attempted to improve attitudes toward police. One suggestion mentioned by President Obama's commission was that agencies should hire from groups with whom citizens have positive experiences (p.34). The military typically ranks high in trust (p. 223) suggesting that this would be a good recruiting venue. However, this is offset by a negative perception toward militarization. If the public perceives an increase in police misconduct, it would be valuable to understand if military experience brings an increased trust or, conversely, an increased likelihood of misconduct, complaints, or use-of-force issues.

PTSD and Other Negative Effects of Military Experience

McKinnet et al. (2017) surveyed 545 veterans to study the risk of suicide and the relationship of PTSD symptoms, depression, anger and hostility to that risk. Veterans have a higher risk of suicide when compared to the general population and the authors suggested that the higher rate of PTSD in veterans could be a contributing factor. The survey found that PTSD was related to suicide risk and can affect the ability of a person to control their mood and emotions. Combat-related PTSD also is associated with a reduced ability to control anger. PTSD can lead to depression and anger, which can lead to suicidal behavior. The study focused on recognition and treatment of these risk factors.

Noppe (2018) conducted a study on police officer use of force and the relationship between their exposure to provocation and the effects of moral support. The study took a different approach to factors involved in use-of-force incidents. Noppe did not consider the background, training, or experience of the officers, focusing instead on triggering factors and the officer's moral justification for the use of force. However, Noppe's study provides a perspective on the theme of the negative perceptions of combat military experience. The study used a theoretical framework of moral action based on Wikström's situational action theory (SAT). Noppe theorized that if the officer's moral rules match the moral rules of the situation, the officer is more likely to use force and found that officers that are more sensitive to provocation are more likely to use force.

Noppe's study did not directly address military service or experience, but it served as a basis for further research regarding how officers develop moral rules, especially if those morals lean towards a violent response. Further study is also needed on how exposure to provocation affects officers. Do they develop an ability to cope with provocation as they are provoked more often, or does it make them more likely to use force? Is there a need for understanding how military experience leads to an officer's moral rules?

Curran et al. (2016) wrote about the natural fit of military skills in civilian law enforcement careers. The authors used the perspective that the drawdown in forces from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan led to many service members leaving the military and seeking employment in law enforcement. The similarities and differences between the military and law enforcement were discussed. The authors outlined the transition process

for servicemembers and discussed the benefits that military experience can bring, but they also explored the potential for psychological issues that may stem from military and combat experience, and the challenge of identifying individuals with those issues during the hiring process. The authors noted that combat veterans have significantly higher scores of anti-social attitudes, phobic personality and rigid personality traits on the Inwald Personality Inventory (IPI) (p. 168) and that psychological assessments are important prior to employment.

Violanti et al. (2016) conducted a study on the impact of occupational stressors in police work. The authors used the Buffalo Cardio-Metabolic Occupational Police Stress (BCOPS) study and collected saliva samples to measure cortisol response. The study focused on police officers but did not factor in military experience, however this study relates directly to the Hartley, et al. (2013) study and provides further understanding of occupational stress. Notable findings of the study were the highest stressors: involvement in shootings (which, they noted, can also result in PTSD, use of force, assaults on officers, and exposure to dead or battered children). The authors mentioned that the bond of police culture could also influence the perception of stress in police work by creating a collective reaction.

The study related to the theme of PTSD/psychological issues in law enforcement. This ties into the Hartley et al. (2013) study measuring the impact of military experience. Military experience could be a factor in the perception of stressors and the ability to cope.

Worden et al. (2014) studied the tools for assessing the risk of police misconduct and ways to improve risk management in law enforcement organizations. Previous

military discipline was mentioned as an indicator of risk of police misconduct, but prior military or combat service was not otherwise mentioned. Officers who are more aggressive and have higher interaction tend to have more misconduct complaints. The study provided a framework for law enforcement agencies to develop a risk management plan and to predict the likelihood of future misconduct as well as a framework for possible future research on whether combat military experience is an indicator of higher or lower risk.

Fagan (2013) utilized a qualitative survey to study law enforcement officers with prior military experience. Fagan surveyed officers in two police departments, one suburban and one mid-sized urban agency, to query their perception of the impact of their military experience and preparedness for the law enforcement role. Fagan found that the officers broadly considered their military experience to be an advantage in civilian law enforcement, that it left them better prepared than their nonveteran counterparts, and that combat experience was generally positive for their professional careers. However, some indicated that combat experience had left a negative effect on their personal lives. Fagan also noted the occurrence of PTSD in both law enforcement and the military but did not explore the effects on the officers surveyed.

Henson et al. (2010) conducted a study of police recruit performance using data collected at a mid-sized police department over the course of ten years. The recruits were compared over several variables including education, military experience, age, race and prior law enforcement experience. Data on complaints and commendations were also collected on these officers as they advanced in their careers.

The study found statistically significant results with two areas in regard to military experience: the final academy exam and use-of-force complaints. Military veterans were more likely to receive use-of-force complaints over their career. The authors did not speculate on reasons for this higher rate.

There is a theme that military veterans may be somewhat detrimental in civilian law enforcement due to an increased likelihood to use force. This study follows that theme but does not go into detail, as military service was only one of several variables collected. The study does not differentiate combat and noncombat military service.

Sanders (2010) conducted a qualitative study of the perception of police chiefs in regard to what characteristics define an effective police officer. This perception can be insightful because chiefs are often the ultimate authority deciding who gets hired and enters a career in law enforcement. Sanders' study was limited to smaller agencies and may not be applicable to larger urban police departments.

The chiefs all valued maturity and life experience in their new officers. One respondent, who had a military background, favored military experience, but others with a college background preferred a college degree over military experience. Those chiefs actually stated that military experience can be detrimental to police officers, leading them to view everything from a tactical perspective and potentially overreact to a harmless situation.

The City of Racine Wisconsin Police Reform Task Force published their Police Reform Report (2020) in partnership with Payne and Frazier Consultants and Santiago Global Consulting, LLC. The Reform Report was guided by President Obama's pledge to

reimagining policing in the United States and was delivered to the Racine Mayor and Police Chief. Interesting results of this task force study included a survey of the community. Recommendations from the results of that survey included several hiring practices: hiring more minorities, excluding former military from consideration, and screening out bias and PTSD. Although the survey lacked scientific rigor, it was interesting as part of the task force report to note the perception by some community members that military experience would be detrimental to a civilian law enforcement role. Screening for PTSD could also exclude military combat veterans from consideration for employment.

Webster (2008) discussed the issues faced by law enforcement officers when they return from military combat service. The study focused on reservists who were already serving in law enforcement careers when they were sent on a combat deployment but identified related research questions such as the implications of military service among potential recruits. The different use-of-force rules were mentioned as a potential challenge, but the primary concern was addressing unresolved mental health issues. The article utilized case studies from several large urban law enforcement agencies regarding their response to returning combat veterans. The negative aspects of combat experience were the central theme of this article, which was directed toward ways in which police organizations can deal with those challenges and assist in officer reintegration.

Psychological concerns and PTSD were the primary challenges addressed by the author.

Wright et al. (2011) studied 503 recruits at the Baltimore County police academy in order to consider what prior experience could contribute to success in the academy.

The authors considered a number of variables, to include age, race, gender, education, prior work or military experience, drug use and arrest records. Wright et al. noted that previous studies suggested that prior military experience could be advantageous to new police recruits. However, the recruits in their study were less likely to complete the academy if they had military experience or prior police experience. The most positive indicator of success was prior work experience. The authors suggested that prior military and police experience may have been detrimental because Baltimore County was placing an emphasis on college education.

Rohlf's (2010) examined the Vietnam War veteran cohort for their likelihood to commit violent acts or to be arrested and incarcerated. Rohlf's analyzed data from the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (NVVRS) conducted in 1989. The findings were somewhat inconclusive and mixed, differing based on the race of the respondent, but overall Rohlf's concluded that combat experience led to an increased likelihood of future violent acts. An increased propensity for violence could be detrimental to civilian law enforcement service and could lead to future issues in a law enforcement career.

The study is dated, relying on data on Vietnam veterans collected 21 years prior to the study. Most of these veterans are at the late stages of their civilian careers or have exited the work force. The data may not relate to current military combat veterans and would necessitate further research.

Relationship of the Themes

Several themes were apparent after a review of the literature. The transition from military to civilian work can be challenging (Feickert, 2014). Corporate business has recognized the value of military experience and sought to recruit new employees with that experience (Batka and Hall, 2016; Pollak et al., 2019), but the corporate workplace is unfamiliar territory for many service members. These service members are drawn to fields that they can relate with more closely. Civilian law enforcement has been a refuge for many military veterans who see similarities between the warrior archetype and the role of the protector that is common among first responders (Eaton, 2014; Cowper, 2000).

There has traditionally been a positive perception of military experience and a belief that this experience provided a benefit to civilian law enforcement (Matthies, 2011; Chappell, 2008) which led law enforcement agencies to seek out military veterans. Several studies have considered the value of combat experience in law enforcement, such as Hussey (2020), Munoz (2020) and Shernock (2017). Further study differentiating noncombat military experience and combat experience could prove useful.

Offsetting the positive perception of military experience has been a concern about combat veterans. Every returning combat veteran does not have PTSD, but the stigma remains and law enforcement agencies screen for psychological issues in their hiring process (Curran et al. 2016). There are many Reserve/National Guard serving in law enforcement as well and returning combat veterans may bring issues and challenges back into their civilian careers (IACP, 2009; Webster, 2008) that need to be addressed.

A final theme that arose from the literature was the growing concern over the militarization of law enforcement (Fox et al., 2018). Departments focused on hiring military veterans could be considered more militarized. Whether military veterans are a factor in increased militarization or whether militarization is a completely bad thing is outside the scope of this study.

Since military veterans will continue to transition into law enforcement, this study will attempt to improve upon the understanding of the benefits of military experience by differentiating between combat and noncombat experience, learn more about the challenges faced by military veterans, and seek to understand what negative perceptions follow.

Current literature shows that there are perceived benefits and challenges related to military experience. Both can carry over into civilian law enforcement careers and can affect the course of those careers, the law enforcement organizations, and the communities they serve. Few studies differentiate between types of military experience. Not all military veterans have served in combat deployments, and a smaller percentage of those that deployed have seen actual combat. Researchers could find it useful to focus on all military (combat and noncombat) veterans to study whether military training and experience offers similar positive effects in the field of policing. Further research is needed to help law enforcement leaders understand how to best utilize the skills of these veterans while learning how to cope with the issues that may accompany them.

Militarization of policing has become a growing and controversial subject in the United States. Most studies focus on the impact of military equipment on law

enforcement tactics or the use of federal government programs to provide that equipment. Little is known about the influence of military veterans within civilian law enforcement, and what, if any, influence their experience has on militarization. Further study would be necessary, and the pros and cons of the use of military equipment and tactics would need to be weighed.

This study will consider three research questions. The first is “how does prior military service affect the performance of law enforcement officers, as measured by the perception of fellow officers and supervisors?” Several studies considered prior military service in relation to performance in the police academy and the hiring process. Others (Sanders, 2010) considered the perception of law enforcement leaders. Hussey (2020) considered the viewpoint of the impact on citizen interaction.

The second, “how does combat experience affect the effectiveness of military veterans working in law enforcement, as measured by the perception of fellow officers and supervisors?” was addressed in several studies. Munoz (2020) considered the effect regarding use-of-force decisions, while others addressed the perception of heightened resiliency and leadership among combat veterans. Conversely, some studies have highlighted concerns that combat experience brings an incorrect mindset into civilian law enforcement.

The final research question, “what issues have military veterans found themselves facing once they transitioned into a law enforcement career?” relates to the concerns that have been found in several studies, from PTSD, mental and psychological health, to a

negative perception of a warrior mentality and increased militarization in law enforcement.

A case study approach was used to allow a focus on a particular agency and to consider the performance of military veterans within that agency. This approach also allowed a closer look at the issues that veterans face, through the perspective of their fellow officers and supervisors. A case study approach also allowed a comparison between veterans and nonveterans, as well as a comparison of the effects of any military service with the effects of combat deployments. The case study approach allowed for a more in-depth examination of the perception of military experience in law enforcement, which can delve further into the specific benefits and concerns of officers and supervisors as opposed to the quantitative survey method used to establish Shernock's findings. The main research question, describing whether prior military service is perceived to affect the performance of law enforcement officers, was enhanced by also questioning whether combat experience played a part in that perception.

A number of studies have shown the perceived benefits of military experience in the civilian workplace (Batka & Hall, 2016; Pollak et al., 2019). Civilian law enforcement agencies have traditionally recruited from the military (Fagan, 2013; Matthies, 2011). Not all law enforcement leaders, however, believe that military veterans are the best fit for civilian law enforcement (Sanders, 2010).

The transition from military to civilian work can be challenging. Transition programs have been improved to assist military veterans with finding jobs and preparing for civilian life. Several studies have focused on that transition or the benefit of military

experience when entering into civilian law enforcement. However, those studies have not considered if the benefits of military experience carry beyond the academy phase and into the later career.

There is a growing amount of literature regarding the militarization of civilian law enforcement in the United States (Lockwood et al., 2018). There is a public perception that militarization leads to reduced trust of law enforcement (Moule, 2019). A counterpoint to the positive literature regarding military experience is that veterans bring their military mentality into civilian work, making law enforcement agencies more likely to embrace militarization and creating an us-versus-them mentality with the community (Doherty, 2016).

There is also a perception that combat veterans suffer from psychological issues, PTSD, or mental health issues which could affect their ability to serve in law enforcement (Webster, 2008). These issues could create a liability for their employers. However, other studies have hypothesized that military experience may give veterans coping skills which make them more capable of dealing with the stress of law enforcement (Ivie and Garland, 2010).

Military veterans often gravitate toward and seek employment in civilian law enforcement after they leave the military. Many law enforcement agencies actively recruit from the military as well. There is a connection between the military and law enforcement and a perceived benefit to military experience entering that field of work. Studies have considered whether military experience helps in the hiring process and the initial training of law enforcement recruits. However, there are also perceived liabilities

to military and combat experience. Those issues include a military or warrior mindset that may be less compatible with the community policing focus of some organizations. The effects of physical and mental trauma on combat veterans have also been studied extensively and regarded as a potential consideration in the hiring process of law enforcement agencies.

Less is known regarding the value of military experience after a successful transition into civilian law enforcement. There also have been few studies addressing the challenges faced by military veterans in their law enforcement careers. Recent studies considered the effect of combat experience on use-of-force decisions (Munoz, 2020) and the ability of prior military law enforcement officers to interact with the public (Hussey, 2020) but have not looked fully into the perception of officers regarding the overall value and challenges of military experience.

There is a gap in studies on the effects of military service in law enforcement, both for combat and noncombat veterans. This study attempted to fill that gap by addressing perceptions of law enforcement members at every level, from varied backgrounds, with and without military service experience. Finding and defining the perceptions of law enforcement members can help law enforcement leaders and individuals with military experience find the best fit within the career field for their particular set of experiences and skills. By vetting out these perceptions, organizational leadership can benefit from a greater knowledge of their staff, can more effectively provide assistance for the veterans within their organizations, and can also consider both the benefits and challenges that accompany having military veterans as part of their

organizations. Using this research to place military veterans into the most appropriate positions within a law enforcement agency can also help mitigate the public concern that law enforcement as a whole is too aggressive and too militarized.

Literature Relating to the Methodology

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008) described four main types of research designs: experimental, quasi-experimental, cross-sectional, and pre-experimental. There are also combined designs, which can utilize aspects of more than one research design. Each design has its own strengths and weaknesses and can be appropriate for different types of studies.

Pre-experimental designs “are not suitable for experimental manipulations and do not allow researchers to randomly assign cases to an experimental group and a control group” (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008, p. 131). A one-shot case study is an example of a pre-experimental design. A one-shot case study would consist of the observation of a single event to explain the change that occurred.

Creswell (2013) discussed five approaches to qualitative research: narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnographic, and case study. I have previously considered the value of each of these approaches for my particular topic and have favored a case study approach to research the topic. Creswell stated that maximum variation sampling is a popular strategy in qualitative study, and also one that he prefers to use in a case study (p. 156). Creswell also noted that he prefers to select unusual, extreme, and deviant cases. When using maximum variation, a researcher accumulates a sample by

identifying diverse characteristics, then looking for shared or common experiences within the sample.

Creswell noted that the *case* in a case study does not necessarily have to be an individual. The case could also be a small group or an organization (p. 98). This case study did not consider the individual veteran, but rather the law enforcement organization as its case. I selected an organization that was both geographically close and one to which I had some level of access and connection. This would fall under the definition of convenience sampling. Patton (2002) considers convenience sampling to be the least desirable sampling strategy, as it is neither purposeful or strategic, and states that cost and convenience should be the least of all considerations (p. 242).

Patton also describes various approaches to qualitative research. Patton described extreme or deviant case sampling as “selecting cases that are information rich because they are unusual or special in some way, such as outstanding successes or notable failures” (p. 231). Unfortunately, a maximum variation sampling strategy would be difficult for the purpose of this case study. This strategy would require two possibilities: finding law enforcement agencies that have had extremely positive or negative experiences with military veterans within their ranks, or only considering the veterans within a particular agency that have achieved the greatest success or the worst outcomes. Either scenario would have been difficult within the confines of a dissertation due to time constraints and geographical limitation.

Miles et al. (2014) described the methods in their book as the “Miles and Huberman” approach, which they consider to be similar to Creswell’s ethnographic

method, with “some borrowed techniques from grounded theory” (p. 9-10). Law enforcement is a culture, and often a close-knit community that does not like to share with those outside of their group. Military veterans have a similar reputation of associating mainly with fellow veterans. While I did not delve deeply into the “Miles and Huberman” approach, its similarity to an ethnographic approach could make it useful in future research to learn how these two cultures integrate, and whether issues are created because of the inherent characteristics of the two cultures. Data would be gathered through interviews with members of both cultures and analyzed using coding techniques. The hermeneutic approach may be more difficult to utilize in this dissertation topic, but one valuable point can be taken from this approach: the standpoint of the researcher is important to the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data. As a military veteran and law enforcement officer, my perspective varied from that of a researcher with different experiences, and my findings could have been influenced by my own background.

Creswell (2009) examined the three approaches to research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Qualitative methods were chosen for this study as most appropriate to provide an in-depth examination of the perception of law enforcement officers. Mixed methods, such as used by Hussey (2020) would also have been appropriate but would have significantly increased the scope and time of a study.

One of the types of qualitative methods discussed by Creswell was the case study. Theory is not necessarily present in a case study, although a researcher may identify themes or issues and then analyze these themes and present them within a theoretical

model (Creswell, 2009, p. 99). The case in a case study can be an individual, a group, or an entire organization. The number of cases considered in a case study can also vary but is typically a very small number.

Janesick (2011) provided useful tools and advice for qualitative research. One of the suggestions involved the use of video conferencing, virtual sessions, and synchronous chat interviews in lieu of face to face interviews. This can help alleviate discomfort, offer an advantage over email interviews, and provide a timely alternative in an era of pandemic restrictions. Janesick also provided a checklist for a researcher to use when arranging a focus group, to include contacting the participants by phone 1-2 weeks in advance, sending a letter of invitation, giving a reminder call before the session, and inviting more than the required number of participants in order to account for dropouts (p. 121).

I originally considered this topic with a quantitative methodology. A quantitative approach would allow the development of a hypothesis and the testing of a theory. However, the nature of the topic was better served with a qualitative approach, which is more suited to a study of individual experiences, interactions, and personal issues. There are five approaches within qualitative design: ethnographic, narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, and case study. I considered each potential approach.

Ethnographic approaches focus on the beliefs, values, and behavior of an entire culture-sharing group (Creswell, 2013, p. 90). The researcher conducts extensive observation of the culture-sharing group. An ethnographic approach would be a viable consideration for this topic. However, the ethnographic approach relies strongly upon

observation, and the theoretical lens used by the researcher can have a large impact upon the research. This also leaves the research highly vulnerable to bias on the part of the researcher. Although every effort will be made to reduce bias, it is impossible completely remove bias. Since I have a background in both the military and law enforcement, I preferred an approach that is slightly less vulnerable to the researcher's potential bias.

The narrative approach tells a story, and can utilize interviews, observation, and documents to collect data for the story (Creswell, 2013, p. 71). A narrative approach can be used to discuss organizations as well as individuals. This approach would be useful for an organization when using it to consider organizational theory and how that theory could be used by an organization (Patton, 2002, p. 118). The researcher chooses the perspective to use when telling the story in a narrative approach, so this perspective becomes the theoretical lens used by the researcher.

The phenomenological approach is used to study a single phenomenon, which can be anything from an organization or a culture to a relationship or even a feeling. A researcher using this approach considers the phenomenon from the perspective of those that have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The focus of a phenomenological approach is the experiences of individuals and how they interpret those experiences. A phenomenological approach would be useful for some aspects of the topic, such as to understand the experience of combat veterans or those with common experiences such as combat related injury or post-traumatic stress disorder.

Grounded theory approaches are intended to "generate or discover a theory" (Creswell, 2013, p. 83). This represents the most obvious use of theory in qualitative

research designs. A grounded theory study might present the theory in the beginning of a paper and then demonstrate or test the theory, or the paper could develop the theory and present it at the conclusion of the paper.

A case study approach typically collects data through interviews, observations, or analysis of documents (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). Theory is not necessarily present in a case study, although a researcher may identify themes or issues and then analyze these themes and present them within a theoretical model (Creswell, 2009, p. 99). The case in a case study can be an individual, a group, or an entire organization. The number of cases considered in a case study can also vary but is typically a very small number.

A case study approach could be used to develop a theoretical model. This approach could be used to consider the issues of military veterans that have transitioned into law enforcement careers. Once themes or issues are recognized, a theoretical model would be developed concerning the similarities between issues across the cases. This type of approach was used by Clemens and Milsom (2008) to develop a theoretical model, the Cognitive Information Processing model, for service members transitioning into civilian careers.

Several qualitative approaches proved to be viable considerations for this research. However, the case study approach appeared to be the best fit. The case study approach allowed for data collection using multiple methods such as interviews and focus group observation. This approach also allowed me to consider the themes that develop from the data collection, and if certain themes are identified, the case study approach could be used to develop a theoretical model.

A case study requires “thorough, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports)” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97), which matches my vision of the research and would allow each question to be answered fully. Interviews would be conducted with law enforcement leaders, and observation and interviews with military veterans and their nonveteran peers would be required to understand the issues faced by military veterans in law enforcement. A case study approach also presents an “in-depth understanding of the case” (Creswell, 2013, p. 98), which was the goal of this research.

Conclusion

Military veterans often gravitate toward and seek employment in civilian law enforcement after they leave the military. Many law enforcement agencies actively recruit from the military as well. There is a connection between the military and law enforcement and a perceived benefit to military experience entering that field of work. Studies have considered whether military experience helps in the hiring process and the initial training of law enforcement recruits. However, there are also perceived liabilities to military and combat experience. Those issues include a military or warrior mindset that may be less compatible with the community policing focus of some organizations. The effects of physical and mental trauma on combat veterans have also been studied extensively and regarded as a potential consideration in the hiring process of law enforcement agencies.

There was a gap in studies on the effects of military service in law enforcement, both for combat and noncombat veterans. This study fills that gap by addressing

perceptions of law enforcement members at every level, from varied backgrounds, with and without military service experience. Finding and defining the perceptions of law enforcement members can help law enforcement leaders and individuals with military experience find the best fit within the career field for their particular set of experiences and skills. By vetting out these perceptions, organizational leadership can benefit from a greater knowledge of their staff, can more effectively provide assistance for the veterans within their organizations, and can also consider both the benefits and challenges that accompany having military veterans as part of their organizations. Using this research to place military veterans into the most appropriate positions within a law enforcement agency can also help mitigate some public concern that law enforcement is too aggressive and too militarized. Chapter 3 delves into the choice of research methodology, data collection methods, and data analysis methods.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of which skills improve the effectiveness of military veterans in law enforcement, as well as what challenges these veterans face in their careers. Developing a better understanding can assist law enforcement leaders in managing military veterans and can improve their service to the community. One way to develop this understanding is to compare military veterans with their nonveteran counterparts in the field and to analyze the perceptions of individuals within the organization. This will help to discover the differences between those officers and what the positive and negative implications are. Discovering these differences provides a better understanding of the skills and abilities that military veterans tend to bring with them, along with the problems and issues they face.

A qualitative research method is an effective way to develop an understanding of the skills, abilities, problems, and issues of military veterans. Questions exploring the perceptions of these factors formed the central part of this research. The theoretical framework was developed using Shernock's study as a background to delve more deeply into these research questions.

I chose a case study method for this study to develop a more in-depth understanding of the problem. A case study allowed interviews and qualitative surveys to be conducted, which provided a deeper understanding of the perceptions of military veterans in law enforcement. In qualitative research methods, a researcher can benefit from serving in the role of participant. However, in this case study, my role was limited

to observe by interviewing participants and collecting data through surveys. Limiting the role to observation provided some advantage in reducing researcher bias.

Data were gathered at a midsize law enforcement organization within a large metropolitan area. The setting was the law enforcement organization involved in this study. Interviews were conducted on site, but participants were offered an alternate location to protect their privacy. Participants were volunteers from the entire sworn population of law enforcement officers within the organization.

Data collection was accomplished with a qualitative survey of all participants in the study. The survey identified military veterans who were willing to participate in further interviews to collect data on their experiences. Data were also collected via interviews with key leaders in the organizations. Once the data were collected, they were input or imported into NVivo 14 software for organization and analysis. I identified themes through word clouds, word frequency search, and text search.

Trustworthiness is as important to qualitative research as validity is to quantitative research methods. I attempted to ensure credibility through member checks and a thorough description of my background as the researcher. The study was designed to be replicable at other law enforcement agencies to develop transferability. Rich, thick descriptions in narrative format were used to allow the reader to establish trustworthiness. Dependability and confirmability were established through triangulation of site and data collection methods.

The protection of human subjects is of utmost importance. All participation was voluntary. No vulnerable persons were involved in this research, and confidentiality of

participants will be maintained to protect participants from negative consequences.

Collected data were encrypted, securely stored, and kept confidential.

A narrative design was used to describe the perceptions of the participants in a deep, rich format using descriptions and quotes. The results are also presented through the description of the identified themes and descriptions of the responses provided during interviews. Demographic information is provided in table format while protecting anonymity.

The following research questions were identified:

RQ1: How does prior military service affect the performance of law enforcement officers, as measured by the perceptions of fellow officers and supervisors?

RQ2: How does prior military service affect the effectiveness of military veterans working in law enforcement, as measured by the perceptions of those officers who self-report having military experience?

RQ3: What issues have military veterans found themselves facing once they transitioned into a law enforcement career?

Law enforcement is a popular postmilitary career choice for many military veterans, and many law enforcement agencies actively recruit from transitioning military service members. However, little is known about whether prior military experience leads to better performance over the course of a law enforcement career or whether there are negative effects from military experience. In this study, I considered the correlation between military veterans and nonveterans employed in law enforcement in an attempt to understand the perceptions of the effects of military service among law enforcement

officers. Understanding these perceptions could lead to a better understanding of the differences between military veterans and nonveterans working in law enforcement.

I considered several options for the research method of this study. A quantitative approach was originally considered for this topic. Shernock used a quantitative survey approach, and this methodology allows for the development of a hypothesis and the testing of a theory. However, a qualitative approach was better suited to a study of individual experiences, interactions, and personal issues. A mixed-method approach would take advantage of the benefits of both methodologies but adds a great deal of complexity and would take considerably longer to complete. The qualitative method was chosen as the best approach to study perspectives and to effectively address the research questions.

There are five approaches within qualitative design: ethnography, narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, and case study. Ethnographic approaches focus on the beliefs, values, and behavior of an entire culture-sharing group (Creswell, 2013, p. 90). A researcher conducts extensive observation of the group. An ethnographic approach would be a viable consideration for this topic. However, the ethnographic approach relies on observation, and the theoretical lens used by the researcher can have a large impact on the research. This also leaves the research highly vulnerable to bias on the part of the researcher. Although every effort was made to reduce bias, it is impossible to completely remove bias.

The narrative approach tells a story and can utilize interviews, observation, and documents to collect data for the story (Creswell, 2013, p. 71). A narrative approach can

be used to discuss organizations as well as individuals. This approach would be useful for an organization when using it to consider organizational theory and how that theory could be used by an organization (Patton, 2002, p. 118). A researcher chooses the perspective to use when telling the story in a narrative approach, so this perspective becomes the theoretical lens.

The phenomenological approach is used to study a single phenomenon, which can be anything from an organization or a culture to a relationship or a feeling.

Phenomenological research considers the phenomenon from the perspective of those who have experienced it (Creswell, 2013). The focus of a phenomenological approach is the experiences of individuals and how they interpret those experiences. A phenomenological approach would be useful for some aspects of the topic, such as to understand the experiences of combat veterans or those with common experiences such as combat-related injuries or PTSD.

Grounded theory approaches are intended to “generate or discover a theory” (Creswell, 2013, p. 83) and represent the most obvious use of theory in qualitative research designs. A grounded theory study might present the theory in the beginning of research and then demonstrate or test the theory. A researcher could also develop the theory and present it at the conclusion.

A case study approach typically involves collecting data through interviews, observations, or analysis of documents (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). Theory is not necessarily present in a case study, although a researcher may identify themes or issues and then analyze these themes and present them within a theoretical model (Creswell, 2009, p. 99).

The case in a case study can be an individual, a group, or an entire organization. The number of cases considered in a case study can also vary but is typically a small number.

A case study approach can be used to develop a theoretical model. This approach could be used to consider the issues of military veterans who have transitioned into law enforcement careers. Once themes or issues are recognized, a theoretical model would be developed concerning the similarities between issues across cases. Clemens and Milsom (2008) used this type of approach to develop the cognitive information processing model for service members transitioning into civilian careers.

Several qualitative approaches proved to be viable considerations for this research. However, the case study approach appeared to be the best fit. The case study approach allows for data collection using multiple methods such as interviews and focus group observation. A case study can include consideration of the themes that develops from the data collection, and if certain themes are identified, the case study approach can be used to develop a theoretical model.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher is particularly important in qualitative research. The participant role has many advantages and allows a researcher to delve deeply into the topic and acting as an observer-participant can help a researcher understand a topic to a much greater extent than solely through interviews and observation (Patton, 2002, pp. 22–23). However, acting as a participant also has disadvantages. The role is potentially more expensive and time consuming and opens up the potential for increased bias. In this

study, as the researcher, I acted as an observer through the use of interviews and qualitative surveys.

Data collection was accomplished via interviews and surveys. My role involved conducting interviews with law enforcement officers and key leaders in law enforcement organizations. I also developed surveys, conducted the surveys, and collected results. The collected data from interviews and surveys were then transcribed and interpreted to develop themes. My role as researcher also included making contact with organizational leaders to receive permission and access to the law enforcement officers to be interviewed. Prior to any interviews, the interview site was also selected and set up, a recording method arranged, and procedures determined. I worked as a command-level supervisor in a law enforcement organization in the same geographical area, but I collected data from an agency other than where I worked. I did not have any supervisory or instructor relationships with any of the participants in the study. I was acquainted with several members of both organizations. The geographical closeness of the organizations meant I may have encountered and worked with officers in these organizations periodically, but I had no supervisory role with any officer in the organization.

As a law enforcement supervisor and a military veteran, I may be prone to bias, but I attempted to approach the research with as little bias as possible. The case study approach offered some protection, as the combination of interviews and observation may reduce bias as opposed to solely using observation, such as with an ethnographic approach. I made the choice to conduct the study outside my own organization to also reduce the possibility of bias through any relation to the participants.

I selected a qualitative case study methodology, an observer role, and organizations outside my own to minimize bias. No incentives were offered for participation in the study, and I did not anticipate any conflicts of interest as my role within my organization does not give me any authority in the law enforcement organizations being studied. Nonetheless, I am a law enforcement officer and have served in the military, so I took care during the interview process to ensure interviewees did not feel an expectation to respond in a manner favorable to military veterans.

Methodology

Data were gathered at a midsized law enforcement organization within a large metropolitan area. This organization is not located near any active military bases, and therefore would not have a percentage of military veterans outside of the median range. The organization was an average size organization with a typical ratio of veteran to nonveteran officers. This fit the criteria for typical case sampling, described by Creswell (2013) as highlighting what is considered normal or average (p. 158). Patton (2002), in his example of a study of third world villages, noted that the study illuminates key issues that should be considered in any project aimed at those same type of villages (p. 236). This case study similarly used a typical law enforcement organization to help understand military veterans working for other typical law enforcement organizations. Therefore, the sampling strategy used was a combination sampling strategy, consisting of both a convenience sample and a typical case sampling strategy.

There are two types of populations with which a researcher needs to be concerned: the target population and the accessible population. The target population was

the group that the researcher was attempting to generalize, while the accessible or available population was that which the researcher can realistically select from (Ouyang, n.d.). This can be an important differentiation, especially if the available population is not representative of the target population. In that case, the researcher carefully considered the sample design so that the sample is comparable to the target population, not just the available population. Attempting to generalize results from participants in one setting to those in another is an example of an external threat to validity (Creswell, 2009, p. 165).

The target population for this research study is military veterans who have since entered the law enforcement career field in the United States. The research was attempting to generalize results across this population, but sample size is limited to the personnel at two law enforcement agencies in a relatively small geographical area. One way to limit the threat to external validity was to more narrowly define the target population. In this case, the research is designed to study the performance of military veterans in law enforcement careers in one department. The research was designed to be easily replicated in other geographical areas. If similar results were found in other states, the results could be more readily generalized across the overall population. The study attempted to infer results across the larger law enforcement population, but further studies would be needed to attempt to replicate the results.

The available population for this research study is the law enforcement personnel at a midsized, Midwestern metropolitan police department. The number of law enforcement personnel is approximately 600. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) (2008), there are 9,667 sworn law enforcement personnel in the state (p.

15). This department is the second largest law enforcement agency in the state.

Nationwide, there are nearly 707,000 sworn law enforcement officers (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2009). The number of former military personnel employed is currently not known.

This case study consisted of one organization, or case. This reduced the available population to one agency and the sample for this study drew from the entire available population of the organization (approximately 600 officers). Surveys were offered to all sworn law enforcement officers, both military veterans and nonveterans. Interviews were conducted with key leaders in the organization. Both instruments utilized open-ended questions to increase the depth of inquiry. There were no incentives offered for participation in the survey, and I anticipated that about 10% of officers would respond.

Qualitative inquiry does not have the same considerations for sample size as quantitative inquiry. Quantitative inquiry puts more emphasis on the sample size, considering standard error and confidence intervals as part of a formula to determine the necessary sample size (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). Patton (2008) stated that depth of inquiry and richness of information are more important than sample size because they increase meaningfulness and validity (p. 245) and that factors such as “what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (p. 244) take precedent over sample size.

This research plan used a single organization for a case study. Even a single case is not an unusually small sample size for qualitative inquiry. Creswell (2013) stated that

he would limit a case study to a maximum of four or five cases, and that some researchers recommend no more than a single case in a case study (p. 157). A qualitative case study does not lose validity by using a single case, as it is not attempting to generalize the results to an entire population. In this case study, the sample of one case is the organization itself, consisting of the experiences of the individuals within the organization. The study did not assume that the findings will be the same at other organizations and should not overgeneralize the findings.

The sample consisted of all sworn members of a midsized, Midwestern metropolitan police department. Sworn members comprise all employees with arrest powers. In their state, a peace officer is required to have a license under the state's Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Board to be eligible to be hired and sworn into a law enforcement agency. For this study, all officers with an active POST license were considered sworn officers.

Although departments keep some statistics on the military background of their employees, the survey was used to establish the military veterans within the department. All self-identified military veterans were eligible to participate further in interviews if they wish.

The potential sample for this study included all sworn members of the department. The characteristics of the selected sample include their age, sex, education level, years of law enforcement experience, military and combat experience, and supervisory status. Most of these statistics were already available to the department but

were collected as general questions via the survey. These characteristics are not fully available prior to the data collection.

The initial step in this research study was to contact the chief, or representative, in order to ensure that the organizational leadership is willing to allow participation in the study. Initial inquiry was made with leaders in the organizations and both organizations appear supportive of academic study, but no formal request was brought to the chief until the research proposal was complete. Once the proposal was complete and all potential ethical issues considered, the chief was contacted in order to meet and explain the proposed study. With the chief's support, other key leaders were contacted as detailed in Chapter 4, and an online survey was sent out via email to all sworn staff using procedures acceptable to the agency.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through interviews and surveys. Two separate interview protocols were developed, each consisting of questions approved by the IRB. The questions were open-ended and look for themes related to the research questions. The first addressed the perception of law enforcement leaders regarding the performance of military veterans in their organization. These prepared questions were provided to the interviewee along with an IRB consent form prior to the interview. Providing the questions in advance allowed the interviewee the opportunity to consider their answers more fully and to write them out if desired. The key leaders were contacted directly to request the interview, and the interviews conducted at the time and location of their choosing. Body language can often be an important facet of an interview; therefore, the

interviews were conducted in person. However, if the environment had not been amenable to in-person interviews, the interview could have been conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams. The in-person interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder in addition to taking notes. If the interview had to be conducted virtually, Teams offered the ability to also record.

The second set of questions were utilized for interviews of military veterans in the organization and addressed their perception of issues which they have faced in their law enforcement careers and the effect that their military experience had on their careers. Interview questions were open ended, researcher produced, IRB approved, and were kept to a limited number in order to keep the interview duration to less than one hour. As with the leader interviews, in person interviews were preferred but the military veterans could have been interviewed virtually via Teams or in a location of their choosing with consideration for the current environment. They were provided the questions and an IRB consent form in advance. Digital audio recording was used with their consent and for the purpose of accurate note taking, but written notes were taken as well.

Interviews of both key leaders and military veterans within the organization were conducted inside the law enforcement organization. The setting for the interviews was offices or meeting rooms within the law enforcement organization, although the participants were offered an alternate location to protect their privacy. I conducted each interview and every effort was made to ensure that the interviews were standardized as much as possible in both setting and manner of conduct. These interviews examined the perception of law enforcement supervisors regarding how prior military service affects

the performance of law enforcement officers as well as how combat experience affects their effectiveness. Interviews with military veterans working in law enforcement were conducted to examine any issues they perceived during their transition from the military into law enforcement. The audio recording of the interview was transcribed and analyzed using NVivo 14 as described in the data analysis section below.

Surveys were offered to all sworn members of each agency utilizing an online survey tool, SurveyMonkey. Some general questions were used to establish demographic data such as military service, years of law enforcement experience, age, sex, race, educational level and supervisory status. Open ended questions studied the participant's perception of the effects of military service among police officers. This instrument was also researcher produced although it utilized a basic template provided by SurveyMonkey. This email offering the survey was used to request the participation of military veterans in the interview process. The survey itself only captured names or contact information of the respondents who volunteered for a follow-up interview.

Surveys were conducted online through the organization. The surveys examined the perception of law enforcement officers regarding how prior military service affects the performance of law enforcement officers as well as how combat experience affects their effectiveness. The data were collected one time but offered to all sworn officers over the course of a four-week period, in order to give officers time to choose to participate. The time was extended from two to four weeks to achieve an ample sample size. Data was recorded via SurveyMonkey and imported into data analysis software for organization and analysis.

This study did not use a previously published data collection instrument. The data collected through Shernock's (2017) study was used to develop qualitative, open-ended interview and survey questions. Shernock's study used a quantitative methodology and different data collection instruments are necessary to explore the topic in more depth in a qualitative manner.

The development of survey and interview questions drew from some previous studies. Shernock (2017) used a quantitative instrument to establish a mean rating of the effects of military experience, such as enhanced leadership skills, maturity and discipline as well as potentially negative effects such as difficulty adjusting and reduced empathy. I utilized qualitative instruments in order to develop a greater understanding of those perceptions and why they exist. The effects discovered in Shernock's study formed the basis for these data collection instruments.

According to Burton and Mazzerolle (2011), content validity is "secured via a panel of experts who judge the survey's appearance, relevance and representativeness of its elements" (p. 28). Although a pilot study was not used for these instruments, content validity was established by submitting the prepared survey and interview questions to several law enforcement officers and leaders for their review and suggestions. These officials include two doctorate holding administrators and two officers with prior military experience. Their feedback was used to ensure that the instruments addressed the research questions and were appropriate to the target audience.

It was possible that an insufficient number of officers would choose to participate in the study. The initial recourse was to resend the survey to any officers who did not

respond to the first request. Since not all officers check their email on a regular basis, an internal memo could also have been distributed requesting participation. A small number of interviews with key leaders provided an adequate result as the goal of this research is a more in-depth understanding of perceptions, as opposed to a lesser response from more individuals. Therefore, lesser participation in the interview process would have been acceptable as long as some members of the supervisory staff of each organization chose to participate.

Prior to the conclusion of each interview, I addressed main themes that were captured in field notes in order to ensure that my notes matched the intent of each participant's statements. Once I verified the credibility of these notes, the consent was readdressed to ensure that the participant could discuss any questions regarding confidentiality, risks of participation, or dissemination of the results. All participants were given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time prior to the dissemination of the results, and if they chose to withdraw, their responses would have been redacted.

Survey respondents who indicated military experience and a willingness to participate in an interview were contacted to schedule that interview. Further follow-up with other survey respondents was not anticipated or conducted. Interview participants were provided an opportunity for an individual meeting in order to discuss the results of the data analysis of their interview. This provided the opportunity to evaluate their responses and ensure that the themes identified in data analysis matched their intent in the interview. Follow-up interviews were not requested or conducted.

Data Analysis

Patton (2002) noted that case studies require a specific approach to collecting, organizing, and analyzing the data (p. 447) because a single case may include several layered or nested individual case studies within. Each individual case is a narrative within the overall case, and the raw case data must be converted into a descriptive final case study. This requires a well-organized collection of the raw case data.

Survey data was imported into a software tool and analyzed. Since the survey tool was qualitative, all the non-demographic questions were open-ended and allowed for a written response. The first step in data analysis therefore involved reading the responses before developing a coding strategy. I took notes while reading in order to reflect on the link between responses and the research questions. Similarly, interview data was transcribed, input, and analyzed. Coding was used to identify themes.

One of the goals of this research was to develop a narrative about the perception of military experience among law enforcement officers. However, coding would play an important role in the study. Coding for survey data and interview data started by identifying key themes, which assisted in examining similarities and differences between participants' responses and the themes developed in Shernock's (2017) previous research. Themes were placed into broad categories that were defined based on the research questions. Coding was used to assign pseudo names to interview participants. However, categorizing strategies was secondary to the development of connecting strategies and a narrative.

Software products can be invaluable in collecting, organizing, storing, and analyzing data. NVivo 14 was used as a software tool for organizing and storing the collected data from interviews. Data collected from SurveyMonkey surveys was imported into NVivo, which offered greater analysis and coding capabilities. Interview data was transcribed and imported into NVivo, along with field notes and audio recordings.

One weakness of software such as NVivo is that it is less useful for developing connecting strategies. According to Maxwell (2013), programs such as NVivo “can subtly push your analysis toward categorizing strategies, ignoring narrative and connecting approaches” (p. 116). Therefore, care was taken to avoid limiting the analysis to categorizing strategies. However, NVivo remained useful in the organization and storing of data as well as analysis to identify key themes.

Discrepant, or negative cases, involve data that doesn’t match the main data. This study sought to develop themes supported across the department. However, the data collected consisted of perceptions and opinions, and therefore variant perspectives were expected. Discrepant cases were addressed in the findings as an alternate perspective counter to the main findings. As Patton (2002) noted, “readers of a qualitative study will make their own decisions about the plausibility of alternate explanations and the reasons why deviant cases do not fit within dominant patterns” (p. 555).

Trustworthiness

Validity and reliability are key aspects of quantitative research, and even though the goals of qualitative research differ, it remains important to establish the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. Scholars such as Shenton (2004) and Creswell

(2013) described four criteria for determining the trustworthiness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility, or internal validity, seeks to ensure that a study measures what it actually intends to measure. There are several strategies to establish credibility. Shenton (2004) and Creswell (2013) noted that member checks are considered critical to establishing credibility. In this study, member checks took place by reading back the statements that interview participants make in order to verify that the statements have been recorded accurately and reflect the actual intent of their statement. These checks took place during the course of the interview as well as at the conclusion. Information may have been removed if the participant requested it.

Another aspect of credibility is the credibility of the researcher. My background in law enforcement and the military has been mentioned previously when considering the possibility of bias. It is important to note that every effort was made to reduce bias by limiting my role to observation, standardizing the survey and interview process, and not asking leading questions.

Transferability, or external validity, has already been discussed in the context of population and sample size. This study was designed to be replicable in other law enforcement agencies. More importantly, this study used thick description and rich detail of each participant's perception. Creswell (2013) stated that rich, thick description takes place when the researcher describes the participant and setting in detail, allowing the readers to determine transferability (p. 252).

Shenton (2004) noted that overlapping methods are a method of addressing dependability (p. 71). The use of multiple data collection instruments, such as survey, interviews with key leaders, and interviews with military veterans in the organizations, helped to achieve dependability. These overlapping methods, or triangulation, also helped to establish credibility and confirmability. The inclusion of multiple organizations would have helped to achieve site triangulation but making the study replicable also provided an opportunity for triangulation. Therefore, each step of the research study was detailed so that other researchers can repeat the study.

Confirmability is the qualitative researcher's counterpart to objectivity. As noted previously, researcher bias is a potential issue which must be addressed. This research attempted to draw solely from the perceptions of the participants without the inclusion of the opinions of the researcher. According to Shernock (2004), the "role of triangulation in promoting such confirmability must again be emphasized, in this context to reduce the effect of investigator bias" (p. 72). Triangulation included the use of multiple data collection instruments in the form of a qualitative survey of all participants, interviews with military veterans in the organization, and interviews with key leaders. The data collection instruments were reviewed by law enforcement officials outside of the study to minimize researcher bias in the survey and interview questions, prior to review by the IRB.

Reliability is also important in qualitative research. Digital audio recording was used during interviews in order to improve the quality of interview notes. These

recordings were professionally transcribed. NVivo 14 was used for software coding and analysis, and survey data, field notes, and audio transcription were uploaded into NVivo.

I was the only coder for this study, which alleviated any issue of intercoder agreement, or inconsistency between multiple coders. However, intercoder reliability must be addressed. The use of a software tool such as NVivo provided a little assistance in this situation. Methods for coding were described in the data analysis section of this chapter.

Ethical Procedures

The protection of human subjects is vital in any research project. Human subjects must be protected from harm, to include physical, mental, psychological or any other type of harm. Participant safety is of the utmost concern, but especially important in research studies involving a potentially dangerous setting or experiments involving the subjects directly. The confidentiality of subjects is vital to protect them from harm in situations where their participation or responses may lead to negative consequences.

Ethical concerns in this study included ensuring that the subjects provide fully informed consent (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Also, confidentiality may be important. Conducting the research at a single organization could mean that the opinions expressed in an interview will be known to the rest of the organization and may adversely affect members of the organization. If the researcher has a link within the organization involved in the study, there are ethical considerations to ensure that there is no perceived coercion to participate, to reduce the likelihood of biased responses because of the researcher's position, and to prevent issues such as retaliation.

At Walden University, the institutional review board (IRB) exists to ensure that any risk to human subjects is minimized and that no ethical principles are violated. The IRB is particularly concerned with the protection of protected classes such as children, mentally impaired subjects, and the elderly. The IRB also serves to ensure that subjects are not deceived or coerced into participation (Walden University, 2014, p. 17).

To protect human subjects, no data collection was initiated until the research proposal has been approved and data collection methods have been evaluated by the IRB and written consent has been received. Interview and survey questions were developed in advance to allow screening by the dissertation committee and IRB. As with any study involving human subjects, the IRB was used to ensure that ethical concerns are identified and addressed. Recruitment materials, described below, were only be disseminated to potential participants after an agreement had been reached with the department administration to allow contact. Once an agreement had been reached, an introductory message was sent to potential participants providing details of the research and requesting their assistance. All participants were adults acting as sworn law enforcement officers in their organization, and there was no concern about the recruitment of vulnerable persons in this study.

No vulnerable individuals were involved in this study, but there are ethical concerns related to the participants that needed to be considered. The pool of participants were members and leaders within a law enforcement agency, and confidentiality and privacy were of particular concern to many of these individuals. All participation was

voluntary, with no coercion or incentive offered, and no vulnerable individuals were sought out for the study.

In addition to voluntary participation, there were no adverse consequences for refusing to participate in the study. Interviews were only conducted with participants who agreed and signed consent. They were given the opportunity to choose to withdraw from the study at any time. All individual questions were voluntary.

Agreements were obtained with the chief of police and assistant chief in order to achieve access to participants. These administrators were contacted via letter to request permission to survey and interview participants within their agency. The letter explained who I am as well as the purpose of the research. The letter also detailed measures that were taken to ensure confidentiality. Contact information was provided in the letter.

In addition to gaining agreement from the department administration, and only after an agreement has been achieved, an email was sent to all sworn personnel in each department detailing the same introductory information and requesting individual permission to participate in the survey. An email was sent to administrators requesting their participation in interviews. In all cases, it was emphasized that participation is voluntary and anonymous.

All data was kept confidential. Participants' identities remained anonymous by coding the names to assign pseudo names which are assigned randomly and not linked to their real names. This method also protected their demographic information as it was not linked to the participant's name. Participants were advised that their participation was

voluntary throughout the process, and they could have stopped or removed themselves from the study at any time.

All data collected were and will be stored on a password protected laptop utilizing hard drive data encryption. This included audio recordings stored in digital format and electronic notes. Data were backed up on removable media, which is also protected with encryption, and is stored in a separate locked safe. Encryption of all data was accomplished through PGP, now Symantec Drive Encryption. Raw data will be stored for five years from the publication of this dissertation. Access to the data will be restricted to the researcher and committee members. If the need arises to allow data access to other individuals, the time and date of access will be recorded along with the name of any individual accessing the data and the justification thereof. This access will only be approved if accepted by the IRB.

I selected law enforcement agencies outside of my own in order to avoid any related ethical dilemma. Similarly, I did not anticipate ethical issues such as a conflict of interest or power differential because I did not fall within the chain of command of the surveyed organization. All contact, including interviews, were conducted in civilian clothing in order to avoid any perception issues pertaining to either my law enforcement or military status. No incentives were offered by me. The only incentive that was considered was that the administration chose to allow officers to participate during their work hours. This was at the discretion of the assistant chief and did not affect the status of the research.

The results are presented through the use of a description of the identified themes and description of the responses provided during interviews. Names were linked to the responses, but quotes and narratives were used to provide a deeper understanding of the perceptions that come out from the interview questions. Tables are used to provide the demographic information of respondents.

Summary

Chapter 3 described the research methodology to be used in this study. The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of which skills improve the effectiveness of military veterans in law enforcement, as well as what challenges they face in their careers. A qualitative methodology was chosen in order to provide a deeper understanding of these skills and challenges as measured by the perception of participants. A case study method allowed the collection of data at a nearby law enforcement organization and provided a sufficient sample size for the research.

This study analyzed the perception of law enforcement officers, leaders, and military veterans. Surveys and interviews of participants were used to collect their responses. Data analysis was conducted to develop key themes, but it was important in this type of study to also deliver the results in a rich, deep format. This was accomplished through a detailed description of the interview process and responses while maintaining the anonymity of the participants.

This case study method was used to collect and analyze data from a single law enforcement organization. Interviews and a qualitative survey was used to gather

information on the perception of military veterans in law enforcement. Chapter 4 will provide the findings of this study and will discuss the themes identified in the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to consider military veterans who have moved into law enforcement careers and improve understanding of the skills that may have improved their effectiveness as well as the challenges they face. Data for this study were collected through surveys and interviews at a single midsize Midwestern police department. Three research questions were developed:

RQ1: How does prior military service affect the performance of law enforcement officers, as measured by the perceptions of fellow officers and supervisors?

RQ2: How does prior military service affect the effectiveness of military veterans working in law enforcement, as measured by the perceptions of those officers who self-report having military experience?

RQ3: What issues have military veterans found themselves facing once they transitioned into a law enforcement career?

In this chapter, I discuss the setting and data collection methods used in the study, demographics of the participants, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and results of the study.

Setting

Following IRB approval (04-25-23-0390414), the chief and assistant chief of the Midwest police department were contacted, and permission was requested to conduct the study with their organization. A letter of cooperation was signed, and permission was granted by the chief, but all further correspondence was delegated to the assistant chief

and their assistant. Once permission was received (both verbally and via email), email invitations were sent to all sworn staff at the police department. The invitations were sent by the assistant to the assistant chief (a commander) with the footer “This message and confidential survey has been approved by the assistant chief.” At the time of the email, there were approximately 500 sworn staff in the department, and all received the invitation. A second email invitation for interviews was sent to senior leaders, which included all sworn staff with the rank of commander, senior commander, or deputy chief. A third follow-up email was sent directly to survey respondents who indicated a willingness to participate in a face-to-face interview.

All email invitations explained the purpose of the study, procedures, risks, benefits, and voluntariness of the study and included sample questions. Respondents of the first email invitation were sent directly to the SurveyMonkey website upon consenting by clicking on the survey link. Respondents of the email invitations for interviews were contacted directly by me and provided an email or written consent form. Interviews were conducted at locations in the police department at the convenience of interviewees. The locations were personal offices or conference rooms that afforded privacy during the interview.

Demographics

There were a total of 41 respondents to the survey: 22 (53.66%) reported having military experience, and 19 (46.33%) reported no military experience. However, only 32 respondents completed the survey and answered the open-ended questions. Of those who

completed the survey, 17 reported military experience and 15 reported none. Respondents tended to be older, with 50% over 50 years old and 78.5% over 40.

Table 1

Age

Age range	# of Respondents
21–29	4
30–39	2
40–49	8
50–59	14

Note. N = 28

All respondents reported having a college degree, which is a requirement for sworn law enforcement officers in the state. Two thirds of the respondents reported having a bachelor's degree or higher.

Table 2

Education

Education level	# of Respondents
2-year degree	10
4-year degree	13
Graduate level or higher	7

Note. N = 30

Table 3

Race/Ethnicity

Race/ethnicity	# of Respondents
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	2
Black or African American	1
Hispanic	1
White/Caucasian	23
Multiple ethnicity	2

Note. N = 29; multiple ethnicities reported were 1 Black/Hispanic and 1 White/Hispanic.

Table 4*Gender*

Gender	# of Respondents
Male	24
Female	6

Note. N = 30

The survey respondents with military experience reported a wide range of years of service. The survey did not differentiate between active and reserve service, so some of the respondents were still in the military in addition to their full-time duty with the police department. The majority of the respondents served in the U.S. Army. Two respondents had served in more than one branch of the military.

Table 5*Military Experience*

Years	# of Respondents
0	13
< 2	0
2–4	4
5–8	3
9–20	6
> 20	4

Note. N = 30

Table 6*Branch of Service*

Branch	# of Respondents
Army	11
Marine Corps	2
Navy	2
Air Force	3
Coast Guard	0
Other or other nation's military	0

Note. N = 16; some respondents reported service in more than one branch.

There were nine interviewees. Six interviewees were senior leaders (commander or above), three of whom also reported having military experience. Three interviews were conducted with military veterans who were not in senior leadership positions.

Demographics of the interviewees included two females and seven males. All six of the key leaders interviewed stated that they possessed a master's degree or higher. Other demographic details of the interviewees were not shared to protect their privacy.

Data Collection

Data were collected through interviews and surveys. Surveys were conducted using SurveyMonkey, an online survey collection tool. The survey was offered to all sworn members of the police department and received 41 responses. The survey included general demographic questions and open-ended questions regarding each respondent's perceptions of the effects of military service on themselves or officers with whom they work. The survey only captured contact information for respondents who expressed an interest in a follow-up interview.

Interviews were conducted with two groups: survey respondents who reported military experience and volunteered for a follow-up interview, and senior leaders in the police department. Interviewees were provided a consent form and pre-scripted questions prior to the interview. I conducted all interviews in person at locations in the police department amenable to private in-person interviews. Interviews were audio recorded in addition to notes.

All interviews began with an introduction and rapport building, verification of consent, and then basic demographic questions. The interview questions were open-ended

and often led to further non-scripted follow-up conversation. Upon completion of the interview, the recorder was turned off and contact information was provided to the interviewee for any follow-up questions regarding the process. No payment or other incentives were offered or given to the interviewees.

Data Analysis

Survey results were collected on SurveyMonkey, which also provides analysis capabilities. The most current version of NVivo at the time of this writing is NVivo 14, so the analytic software was upgraded to the newest version and results were imported into NVivo 14 for further analysis and compilation. Interviews were audio recorded, imported into NVivo, and transcribed using NVivo and manual transcription. All responses and notes were read thoroughly to develop an understanding of the themes. Written notes and transcripts were also coded via NVivo. Interviewees were coded as M1, M2, and M3 for those officers with military experience, LM1, LM2, and LM3 for key leaders who also reported military experience, and LC1, LC2, and LC3 for the key leaders who reported having no military experience.

NVivo is valuable for organizing and storing data but can be less useful for developing strategies. While the software was used for analysis and identification of themes, the results did not rely solely on NVivo and are formatted in their relevance to the research questions. Discrepant cases are also addressed in the results.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Creswell (2013) noted four criteria for determining trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility, or internal validity, was

established through member checks repeating and rereading the statements made by interview respondents during their interview. This ensured that the responses were accurate and followed the participant's intent. Survey respondents were able to review their responses before submitting.

Transferability, or external validity, was discussed in detail in Chapter 3, but a medium-sized law enforcement agency was selected in order to make this study replicable to other law enforcement agencies. The questions were non-agency specific and could be used in other studies. Interview settings were offices and conference rooms that were at the comfort of the interviewee.

Dependability was ensured through overlapping data collection methods. Veteran and nonveteran officers were interviewed and surveyed, and key leaders also included those with and without military experience. While a single organization was used in the study, the study method was detailed in Chapter 3 and made replicable to others in order to address confirmability through site triangulation. Efforts were made to reduce the influence of researcher bias by using multiple data collection instruments and having those instruments reviewed by outside law enforcement officials, the dissertation committee, and the IRB.

Reliability was addressed through digital audio recording, professional transcription in NVivo 14, and further use of NVivo for coding and analysis. I was the only coder used for the study. There were no issues of intercoder inconsistency.

Results

The results of the survey and interviews are organized to coincide with the research questions addressed. The first section includes responses from nonmilitary officers and from leaders regarding their perceptions of the performance of military veteran officers. The second section addresses the perceptions of military veterans of their own performance, and the third section combines responses on the issues faced by military veterans in law enforcement.

Perception of Fellow Officers

Survey respondents who reported no military experience were asked if they have worked with officers who are military veterans. If they responded affirmatively, they were asked to describe their perceptions of the military veteran's performance in their law enforcement role. The following responses were received:

- “Dedicated”
- “Need direction they have a hard time flexible and making decisions outside the chain of command”
- “Exceptional”
- “quickly adapt to the profession”
- “Above average performance, in general.”
- “Positive”
- “positive in general”
- “I think they bring a lot to the table in terms of discipline and being patrol ready.”
- “Good discipline and tactical strategies.”

- “Very well when it comes to keeping calm and dealing with challenging people.”
- “Professional”
- “Harsh with civilians”
- “Very responsible.”

When asked what specific benefits they perceived of military experience, the respondents provided the following comments:

- “Keep tidy and uniforms well”
- “Leadership and commitment”
- “ability to work as a team”
- “Self-disciplined, organized, tactical awareness, maintains physical fitness, multi-tasking skills, follows orders, strong leadership skills, self-motivated”
- “Better officer safety, better radio discipline, heightened awareness”
- “punctuality, teamwork, chain of command”
- “thoughtful and direct”
- “Tactical”
- “Calmness, clearheaded, focused, and disciplined”
- “None”
- “Their ability to follow direct orders and to work effectively within a team setting is incredibly beneficial.”

The respondents were asked for their perceptions of the challenges faced by their counterparts because of their military experience. The following comments were collected:

- “Lack of ability to make independent decisions”
- “Other responsibilities on top of the regular stressors of the job.”
- “Rigid personality, narrow minded, difficulty fitting in or getting along with other officers, interpersonal skills lacking, over confident, lacks empathy and emotional self-awareness and understanding of others, judgmental”
- “Difference between combat vs. LE”
- “at times lack of ability to think outside of the box and navigate gray areas
- “Too rigid militaristic in some cases.”
- “Short temper. Mentality of US V THEM. Very conservative approach”
- Stoicism, pessimists, Stuck in their own way, lack of empathy”
- “Time away”
- “No compromise. They tend to disrupt the office environment. It’s like walking on eggshells around the office. This is not for all but it is a pattern”
- “No challenges compared to officers who have not served in the military.”

I conducted interviews with key leaders regarding their perceptions of the performance of officers they supervise. Six leaders were interviewed, three of which reported having no military experience. The leaders’ responses followed some of the same themes as the survey respondents, including perceptions of better discipline among military veterans, better ability to accomplish tasks, and better initial academy performance. LC1 said,

They’re dedicated. They’re disciplined. They’re you know, they get they get big picture. They get sacrifice. They get, you know, all of these things that are

important in this job to be able to. And so they're working and they're definitely an asset and benefits.

LC2 responded:

When you give them a task, they're going to get that shit done. You're not going to have to check or engage them further about where is this that they're all over it. They don't perform as well in gray areas where there's a lot of discretion. They're regimented. There's strictly on the chain of command and they can't really think outside of that sometimes.

LC3 stated:

People with military background perform very well in the onboarding phase. They're great, you know, especially it comes to weapons handling for the most part. There's going to be a leader in the academy, those types of things as president or otherwise, because of their familiarity with thriving or being successful in that environment, how to navigate it. I would say that they're also very keen when it comes to understanding how the operation works from a policy level and from operational, you know, from a procedural level, because they've already been well inculcated in the in that methodology.

I think if I start if you start looking at where they hit the ceiling is what getting into the command level and above, we have very few military veterans, very few, or it takes them a lot longer in their career to either be motivated to take those exams or to particular superior pass them successfully. And I don't know all the reasons for that. I attribute some of that to kind of some of that. If they were to

maybe that wiring around kind of that regimented thinking and we get to more gray area thinking in in command level stuff where especially in police command it's very gray area thing.

LM1 said:

If I look at those people in the department who have military experience, I just feel like they tend to be more reliable, more understanding, you know, more willing to kind of suck it up and do it. There's always an exception to the rule, right? There's always one or two that screwed up for the others. But generally speaking, they seem much more adaptable. We've got guys you're going to get you get blown up by an IED and he doesn't have it here and, externally or and he's matched up to a smile on his face. Every day comes to work.

Some of our rules are risk averse. And I could see, veterans who aren't necessarily afraid to make a decision and stand by it and defend it, feeling a little hampered by it.

LM2 responded:

I wouldn't say that there's a huge difference because at this point and in their career, my career, most police officers know how to follow orders and know how to execute orders. I want to this is a huge difference, but I would say that there is a mild difference in that veterans tend to be more accepting of that direct style of communication they're used to. It's not unfamiliar to them. And again, they're used to the operational planning that the military uses. They're good at writing

search warrants. They're good at giving orders. Following orders. They're more disciplined. They can take being uncomfortable.

LM3 provided:

I have a little bit of a bias towards being interested in that background and seen in that value that translates to. A lot of it has to do with personal appearance, has to do with task management and getting things done. A lot of it has to do with maybe not having to, but I feel like I can give a task and know that it will be followed up on.

Perception of Military Veterans

Of the survey respondents, 16 answered the question “If you have served in the military, describe your perception of how military experience affects your performance in law enforcement.” The most common themes identified were that they tended to be more calm under stress and have better discipline. Leadership, tactics, and relevant training were mentioned by multiple respondents. Responses from the survey questions were as follows:

- “Military veterans typically have more bearing, poise, and clarity during complex/chaotic incidents. I believe this allows me to make quicker and better decisions under stress. I also believe that leadership and subordination (followership) comes more naturally due to the fact that LE is a para-military organization.”

- “I believe my experience in the military made it easier to transition into the law enforcement field. Simple things like chain of command and starting at the bottom were easily understood.”
- “I feel that it helps in the aspect of tactical awareness and situational awareness. It also helps with discipline and time management.”
- “I know for a fact, that, as a member of the military, I am more professional and disciplined as a police officer. Also, the training I received in the military in regards to equal opportunity, sexual harassment makes me more effective as a police officer, because I am more professional, and I ensure that my coworkers are more professional. But more than any of that, my military training definitely increases my officer, presence, and safety, because I have received tactical training for more than 30 years in the military, and it makes me more aware on the street. I know that my experience working with many soldiers across every branch of the military, across every state in this country, as well as working with officers from other countries in the military makes me a more compassionate, understanding, respectful person. And my training in the military makes me a better leader in the police department.”
- “The military has put me in many high stress environments. So it has helped me remain calm in high stress situations.”
- “The military helps you adapt quickly. You’re more comfortable with long work hours or when an unfavorable task is given out. Being yelled at isn’t stressful.”

- “Military experience affected my transition into law enforcement in several ways.
1 - Chain of command and the importance of following orders. 2 - weapons familiarization. 3 - Working in a team environment”
- “I think the broad experiences I had while serving in the military helped me to better serve as a police officer.”
- “I believe it made the transition from civilian, or not being in law enforcement, into the field much easier. Such as the knowledge of rank and structure. I thought it made the academy much less stressful as military boot camp was much more difficult.”
- “It introduced me to structure and order of how rank and file operate, marching, promotions, discipline as well as honor and pride.”
- “Tactics and leadership learned in the military helps out a out on patrol on a daily basis.”
- “Military Experience helps you deal with situations that you encounter in law enforcement.”
- “Positive effect on discipline, bearing/appearance, professionalism, promotional exams, integrity. Negative effect on rigidity, stress.”
- “In the military I learned how to remain as calm as possible during high stress situations. As an Infantryman I learned how to function as a member of a team. I think this has led me handle both minor and major incidents with a clear head.”

The interviewees offered similar responses.

LM1 stated:

(In the academy, those of us who were in the military) didn't get stressed out by the little things. We'd see other people just freaking out. And we're like, Guys, this is all part of the deal, right? Just take it easy. You know, it seems like we all start to do really well, right? Like to just, you know, I won the academic award from the academy, right? And it was just like. It just seems like it was kind of ingrained in you and you just this is the process. You don't start off on top. You start from the bottom. Serve your time. Do as you're told. And I feel like those that didn't have the military, that was more of a struggle for them.

LM1 continued:

When you're in a military, regardless of what branch, what, you know, active duty, reserves, whatever. You just see stuff. You see stuff that most people don't see. And I think it just puts it all into perspective. And it seems like that's why I think they're just so agreeable. But by the same token, you know, they won't they won't take crap. Like if you give them a stupid, idiotic thing or you tell them to do something that they know isn't right, they'll push back.

LM2 offered:

It helped with, you know, everything from interviewing to become a police officer to getting hired, you know, to getting through the academy and then to dealing with stressful, chaotic incidents, you know, throughout FTL. And then, you know, me being a patrol officer for four, five years, it helped with planning, writing, executing search warrants, operations plans, operations orders that are derived quite literally from military operations orders. The five paragraph situation,

mission execution, Administration logistics command signal. You know, police departments nationwide copy that. So that we, coming from the military have a huge leg up on comprehending how to write and utilize a five paragraph order we still use it today and then certainly later on in my career. Being a sergeant, being a commander and being a senior commander, just understanding the leadership traits, principles and characteristics that I learned in the (military) go a very long ways. And in leading an officer, whether it's an investigative unit or an operational unit. Leadership traits and characteristics don't change. So, absolutely, the military has helped tremendously in my career.

M1 said:

It adds to situational awareness. It adds to tactical awareness. And the old military bearing of your uniform. Um, the military's prepared me for hurry up and wait. You know, if you're out on a job for the police department and things just don't go as planned, you're like, it's just the way it is.

M1 continued:

It's just led me to good success when I was on the Swat team because I had that tactical experience, although it's different in a combat zone as opposed to, you know, in the United States. But some of the tactics that we used in the military when I came back and we were doing some training with the Swat team, you know, I brought a few things up. And the Swat commanders said that's a damn good idea. I don't know why we never thought of it. They adapted some of those things. And then, through interview skills and, just all around my background and

training has helped me. I know. It helped me hands down with my promotion to Sergeant here through the through the entire promotion process.

M2 stated, “It’s definitely helped me be a more disciplined police officer.”

Issues

Survey respondents were asked “Have you found yourself facing any issues related to your experience as you transitioned into a law enforcement career?” Several reported no issues, however the following responses were collected:

- “Civilian leaders are intimidated by the significant level of experience and often don’t realized how to employ your skills effectively. They also don’t understand the skills you have that are not typical.”
- “Coming from the USMC active duty, I would say I was too “militaristic” and needed to tone down this down. Being too rigid is not a good trait for a street cop. But I experienced advantages in dealing with hardship and discomfort from my time in the military that my nonveteran police colleagues did not have.”
- “I have found that laziness and the inability to stay calm is something I detest in coworkers.”
- “I was always in a dual role. I was guard and law enforcement at the same time.”
- “No major issues other than dealing with injuries sustained from the military.”
- “It was definitely a learning experience! For the most part, the similar nature of LE to the military made the transition relatively easy.”

- “I don’t believe so... The one that might come to mind is I look at rank and seniority much more than what I believe how others view it that were not in the military. Some people just don’t seem to respect seniority at times.”
- “The only issue I have sometimes is some of the wartime tactics I learned in the military do not apply in civilian life.”
- “Confidence instilled by the military can come across as arrogance.”

LM2 said:

While I should have been probably more mature than most officers that I came on with, I was probably too gung ho to too militant, if you will, in that I saw things in black and white. There’s no gray area. It’s either right or wrong. And I think that that didn’t help me a whole lot. It took me a few years to, you know, to kind of ease that back a little bit and start to see the gray. I would say that was that was probably the biggest challenge of all the of all the advantages that it gave me. One disadvantage that it gave me is that I was too rigid. And you can find yourself at the end of a complaint when you go to a call and everything is, you know, rigid and everybody has to do what you’re, you know, what you’re telling them to do. And when they don’t do what they don’t comply, then you run the risk of getting into some forces force issues that probably didn’t need to happen. And that was that was my experience, is that I, I needed to learn to throttle that back a little bit.

M1 stated:

At first it was hard when someone (nonmilitary) would take charge. I’m like, That’s not how I would do it. And then you’d have to have that realization that

there's more than one way to skin a cat. And you're like, All right, they're in charge. Just let them do their thing and follow that direction.

Reserve/Guard Challenges

A number of survey and interview responses focused specifically on the challenges faced by/because of Reserve and National Guard duty. Police officers who are still actively serving in the military through Guard or Reserve duty pose a specific set of challenges that were mentioned several times. One interviewee mentioned multiple deployments, coming back to the police department, dealing with depression and feeling that there was no one to talk to about it. They described a lack of support, and that even though the department says that they support the Guard and Reserve, they did not see it in action. Multiple respondents mentioned that military service hindered their ability to advance in the organization.

One survey respondent wrote:

One of the major issues I have faced as a military person and a police officer is that my military training and three deployment's totaling eight yours has really affected my ability to be promoted or to work in other specialized units. This is specifically because I am eight years behind my peers. And there's nothing I can do in the police department that can get that time back. I should've been a Commander by now, maybe even an assistant chief with all of my extensive training, but because I've been gone eight years out of the past 20, I am behind my coworkers, and I never stood a chance. Also, every time I return from a

deployment I was transferred into a different unit, which makes returning to civilian life, more stressful and traumatizing.

LC1 stated:

We have a lot of reservists. So obviously, you know, managing their time and staffing being you know, this is razor thin as it is now. We want to support them and get them to go and we need them to do that. It's just hard on everybody else. Sometimes when they're gone for whatever it is, you know, they get deployed. We've had officers deployed for three years at a time. They're in our they're in our ranks. They're holding the spot. But they never, ever have stepped foot in this building for a year. That turns into two and sometimes it turns into almost three. That's a challenge. I think it's also a challenge for them to not have a weekend when they have to go do their or their weekend; physical work, whatever, and then go after their weekend and then come back and roll right back into rotation. That can be stressful for them and their families. Depending upon their experiences over the last 20 years, there's been a lot of people that have done and gone some places that I can only imagine and not that we've experienced that directly here, but there's people that have life experiences that you can tell by looking at them that they're struggling a little bit. But I think that the positives far outweigh that.

M3 stated, "The department like shuts your email off immediately and all of a sudden (you lose access to) people that normally you could be in contact with or that could reach out. It's like you're immediately isolated."

The concerns also exist for the organization. Leaders mentioned the challenges faced by filling gaps when officers were deployed and providing support when they returned. One leader mentioned the higher deployment tempo over the last 20 years has increased the strain on the organization and noted that, while it is sustainable at an organization of this size, losing officers for a year or longer at a time can be especially difficult for smaller organizations.

PTSD was addressed in several interviews and survey responses but did not seem to be a major issue. This may stem from the increased focus on mental health for officers and the similarities between the stress imposed on law enforcement and the stresses that a combat veteran faces. Leaders spoke about increased mental health programs in the organization. They also mentioned new veterans' advocacy programs. Even though some respondents had mentioned a lack of available assistance, the leaders seemed to focus recently on implementing more support for officers.

Summary

Several themes were consistent in responses by fellow law enforcement officers about the performance of military veterans. Military veterans were considered to be high level performers, calm under stress, disciplined, and better able to accomplish tasks. Leadership, bearing, and tactical awareness were also commonly mentioned. However, not all responses were positive and several respondents mentioned a militaristic way of thinking and difficulty working with others, including citizens. Military veterans themselves also focused on the positive themes of discipline, calm under stress, tactical

training and leadership but acknowledged a tendency toward rigid thinking and a perceived arrogance.

Several issues and challenges were noted by both groups, with the main issue not involving active-duty veterans but officers who continue to serve in the Guard or Reserve. Those officers face challenges related to performing both duties, extended time away from their civilian job and family, and reintegrating when they return. Their military service is also perceived to be detrimental to their civilian career advancement.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to develop an understanding of which skills are perceived to improve the effectiveness of military veterans in law enforcement, what benefits military veterans bring to an organization, and what challenges military veterans face in their law enforcement careers. A better understanding of these could assist law enforcement leaders in managing military veterans and improving service to the community. This study was conducted at a single organization and focused on the effects of military service among law enforcement officers.

Interpretation of the Findings

The literature review focused on previous studies in the areas of the positive effects of military experience, the negative effects, the militarization of law enforcement, and the transition into civilian careers, Shernock's (2017) research indicated the transferability of combat veterans' skills and abilities to law enforcement and suggested that agencies should take advantage of those skills. Shernock's (2017) study and the IACP (2009) study indicated that benefits outweigh issues for combat veterans. Most participants in this study indicated that military veterans bring skills and abilities into their law enforcement role. Respondents' comments also matched Curran's (2008) results that show a benefit to military experience in initial academy training. The results imply that military experience, whether combat-related or not, offers many of the benefits of combat experience and is generally advantageous to law enforcement.

Ivie and Garland (2019) theorized that military experience provides officers with the tools to cope with stress and critical incidents more effectively. In this study, I noted several comments that military experience tends to make officers more calm under stress and better able to cope with trauma. Based on participants' responses, PTSD did not appear to be more of an issue for military veterans than for law enforcement overall. However, I did not explore the cumulative effect of trauma in detail.

A challenge noted by participants was that military veterans can be too rigid, have trouble fitting into the police organization, and may be harsher toward civilians. This finding indicates a difference between the military model of police outlined by Skolnick and Fyfe (1993), as the military veterans did not find law enforcement a direct fit to their prior structure. The results did follow Curran et al.'s (2016) findings of the natural fit between military and law enforcement skills, however, and participants' reports of rigid thinking was in line with Curran et al.'s note that combat veterans have a higher likelihood of rigid personality traits.

There was little indication that military veterans contribute to the militarization of policing. Participants noted the benefits of tactical military training. However, they reported more of a challenge with the transition to the law enforcement model than bringing a military model into law enforcement.

Overall, this study supports and builds on Shernock's framework indicating a benefit to law enforcement from combat or noncombat military experience. The findings also show there are differences and challenges that military veterans need to understand and address. Furthermore, there are challenges faced by Reserve/Guard duty. These

challenges affect both servicemembers and law enforcement organizations and need to be understood and addressed more fully.

Limitations of the Study

This case study involved a single organization. The participant goals were met or exceeded, but the number of participants was limited to 32 survey respondents and nine interviewees. While this sample size is acceptable based on the size of the organization, the small number of participants could bring credibility into question. This is addressed by the transferability of the study and the collection methods.

The use of a single organization limits the applicability of the results, and a midsize metropolitan law enforcement agency may have different cultural perceptions than other law enforcement agencies in rural areas or agencies of smaller size. For example, the impact of deployed reservists would potentially be greater for a small organization, which may negatively affect the perceptions of those military members in those organizations, whereas a large organization would be less impacted. The results of this study indicate that further research should be conducted to determine applicability.

Recommendations

This study has shown many perceived benefits to military experience for law enforcement officers, but the benefits are not universally acknowledged and there are also concerns. Further research on the perceptions of military veterans in law enforcement careers would be beneficial. One recommendation would be to replicate this study at other law enforcement organizations to verify applicability. Law enforcement agencies

vary in size, location (urban/rural), and structure throughout the nation, and organizational culture could also affect perceptions and responses within an organization.

A second recommendation would be a follow-up quantitative or mixed-method study. Quantifiable data could be collected to compare prior military and nonmilitary officers in areas such as awards, occasions of use of force, discipline, promotion rate, and sick time use. These results would help to compare the perceptions of officer performance with quantifiable areas of their jobs.

Shernock (2017) suggested that law enforcement agencies should implement ways to utilize the skills and experience of combat veterans (p. 22). This study shows a benefit to all military experience. Further research of methods to utilize military experience would benefit organizations.

Implications

Shernock theorized that the positive effects of combat experience outweighed any negative effects for law enforcement officers. This study considered whether there is a positive effect for all military veterans, not just those with combat experience. The responses indicated that, while combat experience may increase the leadership and tactical benefits, military service in and of itself is beneficial to law enforcement. This study supports Shernock's recommendations.

This study contributed to an understanding of the perception of military experience on law enforcement officers. This allows administrators and leaders in law enforcement organizations take advantage of the benefits of military experience and to address the challenge. In turn, this contributes to social change through a more effective

organization, better community service, and building of community trust. This study attempted to improve the understanding of the effect of military experience on law enforcement officers. Law enforcement agencies can use this knowledge to improve public perception and transparency, improve community relations and procedural justice.

Conclusion

Law enforcement is a popular career path for military veterans. Many law enforcement organizations also actively recruit military service members as they transition out of active military service. Prior research showed that military veterans had some advantage in the hiring and initial academy training. Prior research also indicated a benefit to combat experience. However, fewer studies focused on the overall effects of military service in law enforcement. This study attempted to fill that gap by addressing perceptions of law enforcement officers and law enforcement leaders with and without military service experience.

This study determined that there is generally a positive perception of military experience for law enforcement officers and leaders. Those with military experience are seen as more disciplined, task-oriented, and calm under stress. Their training often lends to better understanding of tactics and of leadership. Some issues do arise, such as a tendency toward rigid thinking. The results indicate that military experience, even without combat experience, provides an overall benefit to a law enforcement officer. However, law enforcement officers who continue to serve in the Guard or Reserve face continued challenges based on their dual status. Their military service may reduce their opportunities for advancement, even in an organization that is supportive of their service.

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