

11-12-2025

Understanding the Influence of the Warrior and Guardian Mentalities on Police Behavior Through the Perspectives of Police Training Personnel

Loren Eric Peterson
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu.

Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Loren E. Peterson

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Sean Grier, Committee Chairperson,
Criminal Justice Faculty

Dr. Tiffany McLaurin, Committee Member,
Criminal Justice Faculty

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

Walden University
2025

Abstract

Understanding the Influence of the Warrior and Guardian Mentalities on Police Behavior

Through the Perspectives of Police Training Personnel

by

Loren E. Peterson

MS, Walden University, 2020

MBA, Southern Nazarene University, 2009

BSBA, Oklahoma Wesleyan University, 2007

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

November 2025

Abstract

Research on police culture often contrasts the “warrior” mentality, linked to aggression and control, with the “guardian” mentality, which emphasizes empathy, restraint, and community trust. Yet little research explores how police academy instructors, who shape officers’ professional identities, understand and teach these opposing orientations. This phenomenological study examined how Oklahoma police academy instructors perceive the influence of warrior and guardian mentalities on officers’ decision making and behavior in use of force encounters. Grounded in symbolic interaction theory, the study explored how meaning, socialization, and thought interact to construct officers’ self-concepts and guide behavior under pressure. Fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted, transcribed, anonymized, and analyzed using a modified phenomenological approach. Findings revealed a multidimensional framework drawn from participants’ lived experiences, showing that effective and responsible use of force depends not only on mindset but also on readiness, situational interpretation, and judgment in dynamic conditions. While the warrior and guardian frameworks provide useful lenses, decision making is complex, context dependent, and influenced by other variables. Participants described these mentalities as situationally activated, socially constructed, and reinforced through training culture. Emotional intelligence and behavioral modulation emerged as mediators linking mentality to professional restraint. Implications for social change include integrating emotional intelligence and fear management training into academy curricula to cultivate balanced, emotionally regulated officers aligned with contemporary democratic policing values to facilitate better service and enhance community relations.

Understanding the Influence of the Warrior and Guardian Mentalities on Police Behavior
Through the Perspectives of Police Training Personnel

by

Loren E. Peterson

MS, Walden University, 2020

MBA, Southern Nazarene University, 2009

BSBA, Oklahoma Wesleyan University, 2007

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

November 2025

Dedication

To my amazing wife for all her love, patience, encouragement, sacrifice, and flexibility through the duration of this PhD process. I could not have done this without her.

Acknowledgments

I want to take a moment to express my deepest thanks and gratitude to all those who have helped me along the way toward attaining my doctorate. While I cannot specifically name everyone who has supported me in this endeavor there are several that are particularly noteworthy. First, my wife and my family. I could not have done it without their love, support, and encouragement. Too many times they heard, “I’m sorry I can’t, I have to work on my PhD” but understood and were most gracious about it. Second, to my dissertation committee. To my Chair, Dr. Sean Grier and my Second, Dr. Tiffany McLaurin, you both have been incredibly helpful and patient through the years that it took for me to work my way through this doctoral process. You provided a great mix of guidance and accountability but also of balanced understanding when life threw some unexpected curves. Next, to my Dean, Dr. Wendel Weaver at the University where I work. Thank-you for all your help, encouragement, for allowing me time to work on my coursework and residencies, and for being so supportive over this long process. Also, thank-you to my academic advisor Greg Murphy. He fielded numerous calls from me over the years, checked up on me, and handled the day-today things that arose during my time as a doctoral student. He was knowledgeable and kind which made it much easier to be a ‘student’. Finally, a special thank-you to the police departments, C.L.E.E.T., and administrators that graciously allowed me to come to their police academies to meet with their personnel to conduct this study. It was an honor to meet all the professional law enforcement instructors that I was privileged to during this research project, and an honor to work with them. Thank-you all for your time, professionalism, and insights. Stay safe!

Table of Contents

List of Tables	vi
Chapter 1	1
Introduction	1
Background.....	3
Problem Statement.....	6
Purpose of the Study.....	8
Research Question	9
Theoretical and/or Conceptual Framework for the Study	9
Nature of the Study.....	11
Definitions	15
Assumptions	16
Scope and Delimitations	17
Limitations.....	18
Significance	19
Summary.....	21
Chapter 2: Literature Review	23
Introduction	23
Literature Search Strategy	26
Theoretical Foundation.....	26
Conceptual Framework.....	28
Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts.....	29

Defining the Warrior and Guardian Mindsets	29
Differentiating Between Mindset and Mentality	32
Factors Associated with Mentalities and Behavior	33
Summary and Conclusions	52
Chapter 3: Research Method	63
Introduction	63
Research Design and Rationale	64
Role of the Researcher.....	65
Methodology.....	68
Participant Selection Logic.....	68
Instrumentation.....	69
Procedures for Pilot Study.....	70
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection (as Appropriate).....	73
Data Analysis Plan.....	76
Issues of Trustworthiness	77
Ethical Procedures	82
Summary.....	83
Chapter 4: Results.....	86
Introduction	86
Pilot Study	87
Demographics.....	90

Data Collection	93
Data Analysis.....	94
Evidence of Trustworthiness	96
Credibility.....	96
Transferability	97
Dependability.....	98
Confirmability	100
Research Instrument: Interview Questions.....	100
Results	105
Question 1	105
Question 2.....	110
Question 3.....	113
Question 4.....	117
Question 5.....	121
Question 6a.....	123
Question 6b.....	126
Question 7.....	130
Question 8.....	135
Question 9.....	138
Question 9a.....	141
Question 10.....	144
Question 10a.....	148

Question 11.....	151
Question 12.....	154
Question 13.....	157
Question 14.....	161
Evaluation of Findings: Overarching Themes.....	165
Behavior Adaptability is Central to Responsible Use of Force.....	165
Officer Identity Shapes Interpretation and Action	166
Training Institutions Socialize Mentality and Behavior.....	166
Guardian Mentality Moderates Force Through Relational Policing	166
Warrior and Guardian Mentalities as Situationally Activated Roles	167
Emotional Intelligence and Interpretive Moderator	167
Summary.....	168
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	171
Introduction	171
Interpretation of the Findings	174
Confirming Findings.....	174
Contradictory Findings	176
Advances Scholarly Understanding.....	179
Limitations of the Study	182
Recommendations	183
Implications	184
General Study Implications	184

Theoretical Implications	186
Implications for Positive Social Change	187
Recommendations for Practice	188
Conclusion	196
References	199

List of Tables

Table 1. Participant Demographics ($N = 15$).....	92
Table 2. Participant Descriptive Words for the Warrior Mentality.....	118
Table 3. Participant Descriptive Words for the Guardian Mentality.....	121

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

For people to coexist in a mutually beneficial manner, a society must have rules or laws that govern interpersonal behavior. Moreover, an authoritative body is necessary to enforce adherence to rules and norms and to take corrective actions when violations occur (Fagen & Tyler, 2004). Within the United States criminal justice system, this principle is referred to as the rule of law. It encompasses principles, laws, procedures, and ideals working to ensure an orderly and just society in which everyone is held accountable to the law, all are treated equally, and there is a defined and fair process that governs enforcement (American Bar Association, 2021). While most people agree with these fundamental principles, the more controversial aspect of this concept is how the agency enforces adherence to the law and respond when violations occur. Regardless of merit, contemporary law enforcement agencies at all levels have received significant criticism regarding both their enforcement practices and officers' treatment of individuals during the performance of their duties.

A contentious aspect of law enforcement is the use of force. Police use of force is at times necessary and legally sanctioned within established parameters, yet it also has the potential to generate significant distrust and ill will within the community (Tyler, 2015). The authority to use force distinguishes law enforcement from all other civilian occupations. However, the manner in which police employ can lead the public to distrust and question the legitimacy of their local police enforcement (Bradl & Stroshine, 2012). Due to the serious consequences of police use of force, factors contributing to police use

of force are frequently the focus of academic study, making it one of the more thoroughly researched aspects of the police profession.

Although police misuse of force or abuse of power has provoked public outrage on various occasions, the death of George Floyd in May of 2020 precipitated nationwide civil unrest, protests, and riots (Moulds, 2021; Rorholm, 2021). In the ensuing months of protests, vitriol and highly charged rhetoric, and riots, many aspects of police procedures and behavior came under scrutiny (Moulds, 2021). Few police behaviors are more widely studied and scrutinized than police use of force (Kyprianides et al., 2021; Mullinex et al., 2021). One developing focus in use of force discussions has been the hypothesis that police training fosters a warrior mentality. Proponents of this idea contend that officers with a warrior mentality view the very public they are sworn to protect as an enemy to be overcome (Stoughton, 2014; Stoughton, 2015). As a result, some argue that police use force excessively, both in frequency and severity. Alternately, others posit that officers should be trained to develop guardian mentalities rather than warrior mentalities (Kearns, 2015; Rahr & Rice, 2015). Advocates believe that officers with a guardian mentality would view the public more favorably and relational manner, therefore refraining from using force except as a last resort. Although academic and professional publications have discussed the contrast between warrior and guardian mentalities, little research has addressed the accuracy of the hypothesis, the measurable existence of the phenomenon, precise definition of the terms, or the impact of these orientations on the officer's behavior.

Background

Historically, before law enforcement became an organized government-controlled entity, community safety was the responsibility of all members of the community. Early laws made it a punishable offense to refuse to protect or defend the community during times of need (Summerson, 2007). The concept of an organized police force was frequently resisted, as it evoked images of a standing militia and the potential for abuse of power by those granted policing authority. In establishing a professional police force through the Metropolitan Police Act of 1829, Peel recognized these concerns and articulated them in his *Nine Principles of Policing* (Law Enforcement Action Partnership, 2021, “Sir Robert Peel’s Policing Principles”). His principles not only provided guidance for the new police in defining their duties but also served as a social contract, outlining expectations for law enforcement and behavior with the people of London. Four of Peel’s principles are germane to the topic of this paper and the more general discussion of police use of force. Peel’s 2nd Principle:

To recognize always that the power of the police to fulfill their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behavior, and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect (Law Enforcement Action Partnership, 2021, “Sir Robert Peel’s Policing Principles”).

Peel’s 3rd Principle:

To recognize always that to secure and maintain the respect and approval of the public means also the securing of the willing cooperation of the public in the task

of observance of laws. (Law Enforcement Action Partnership, 2021, “Sir Robert Peel’s Policing Principles”).

Peel’s 4th Principle:

To recognize always that the extent to which the cooperation of the public can be secured diminishes proportionately the necessity of the use of physical force and compulsion for achieving police objectives. (Law Enforcement Action Partnership, 2021, “Sir Robert Peel’s Policing Principles”).

Peel’s 6th Principle:

To use physical force only when the exercise of persuasion, advice, and warning is found to be insufficient to obtain public cooperation to an extent necessary to secure observance of the law or to restore order, and to use only the minimum degree of physical force which is necessary on any particular occasion for achieving a police objective. (Law Enforcement Action Partnership, 2021, “Sir Robert Peel’s Policing Principles”).

Peel recognized that trust and mutual cooperation were essential for the police effectiveness and legitimacy (Law Enforcement Action Partnership, 2021, “Sir Robert Peel’s Policing Principles”). Moreover, he believed that police use of force must remain minimal and exercised only when other enforcement efforts failed. Arguably, the most salient quality of his principles lies in the recognition that excessive use of force could undermine trust, legitimacy, and public cooperation. Although Peel’s principles for policing were written nearly 2 centuries ago, his insights into the relationship between police use of force and public trust are reflected in the development and aftermath of

contemporary protests and riots following the death of George Floyd and other highly publicized deaths of African Americans at the hands of police.

The protests and riots of the summer of 2020 affected politics, race relations, public policy, religious teachings, the national economy, and many other aspects of society. At the epicenter of this social upheaval were numerous criticisms of the police practices, particularly regarding policing in minority communities (Vitro et al., 2022). Debates surrounding police behavior and enforcement include, but are not limited to, the militarization of police, racism, use of force policies and techniques, stop and frisk practices, defunding the police initiatives, police reform, public distrust, lack of transparency, and central to this study, the reinvigoration of whether or not the police being trained or socialized to develop a warrior mentality (Eder et al., 2021; Rhodes, 2020).

Although numerous articles have been written on the warrior and guardian mentalities in various newspapers, professional periodicals, symposiums, and some academic journals, few academic studies have specifically investigated this topic. Two current works have added to the scholarly work to better understand this contemporary proposition. In their study, Thibodeau et al. (2017) studied the role of metaphor in explaining real-world phenomena. They used the real-world example of the terms warrior and guardian to help explain the role of police officers. Their research confirmed that metaphors function as a mechanism for understanding abstract ideas and concepts. Their work also demonstrated that metaphors also communicate a spectrum of attitudes and beliefs (Thibodeau et al., 2017). In the process, their work incidentally provided insight

into how the public perceives the police when described as warriors or as guardians, as well as illustrating the emotional impact associated with each term when they were associated with police. The second major work was conducted by researchers McLean et al. (2018), who attempted to determine whether the alleged warrior mindset or guardian mindset were real, and empirically measurable, orientations. They found the mindsets were distinct, empirically measurable, and influential in shaping officer behavior. Their findings also demonstrate that the orientations were not mutually exclusive; officers typically exhibited elements of both but differ in the degree to which they identified with one orientation over the other (McLean et al. 2018). My work contributed to a richer understanding of how police training personnel interpret the warrior mentality and perceive its impact on behavior. It is an important step to developing greater insight into how each stakeholder perceives the terms and their beliefs on how the orientation influences subsequent behavior. Secondly, this research provides insight into whether, and how, the warrior mentality influences officers' use of force decisions, thereby contributing to existing knowledge of variables correlated with police use of force.

Problem Statement

Given the significance of police use of force in shaping community relationships, compounded by the historical problems between marginalized communities and law enforcement, the importance of continued research on the variables contributing to police use of force cannot be overstated. Despite changes in policy, training, and culture, perceptions of inappropriate or excessive police use of force continue to intensify tensions between law enforcement and marginalized communities (Zare et al., 2024).

This undercurrent of distrust undermines the mutual cooperation necessary to reduce crime and improve public safety.

There has been substantial research examining the many variables that contribute to police use of force. One contemporary hypothesis suggested that police officers are trained to adopt a warrior mindset, which influences the way officers interact with people while they are on patrol (Stoughton, 2015). This theory indicates that while police officers may be trained to adopt a warrior mindset restricted to life-threatening circumstances, this mindset has expanded into a generalized warrior mentality. It is believed that officers with a warrior mentality may be predisposed to behave in a more aggressive manner consistent with that orientation. Fueled by metaphors such as the “war on drugs” and the “war on crime”, police officers who identify with the warrior mentality may view citizens as enemies to be defeated rather than individuals to be protected (Stoughton, 2015). This hypothesis suggested that police officers who subconsciously view citizens as enemies are more likely to use force, to employ higher levels of force than necessary, or engage in using excessive force. Finally, this perspective held that if police training emphasized the guardian mentality, defining citizens as valuable and worthy to be protected, then officers would be less likely to use force (Rahr & Rice, 2015; Stoughton, 2014; Stoughton, 2015).

What remains unknown is whether the purported link between warrior and guardian mentality and police use of force is rhetorical or empirically measurable (McLean et al., 2018). There is little research exploring how a police officer’s identification with the warrior mentality may influence the officer’s behavior, discretion,

or use of force decision making. Moreover, little research addresses the following questions: (a) Are police officers aware of possibly self-aligning with either a warrior mentality or guardian mentality? (b) How do police officers or trainers conceptualize these orientations? (c) How are these mentalities learned or developed within police culture? and (d) To what extent do police officers behave in ways consistent with these orientations compared to other factors that influence daily police work? In this qualitative study, I examined how Oklahoma police training personnel understand the concept of a warrior mentality and perceive its influence on police behavior. Additionally, it may provide insight into the validity of the purported warrior and guardian mentality in policing and the function of these roles in practice (McLean et al., 2018). The findings from this study may contribute to the body of research by enhancing understanding of the warrior and guardian mentalities from the perspective of law enforcement instructors and officers, informing police training, assisting future police policymakers, and expanding knowledge regarding the factors contributing to police use of force.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand police training professionals' perception of the warrior and guardian mentalities in law enforcement and the potential influence that each mentality may have on police use of force behavior. Several authors postulated that police officers are being trained to adopt a warrior mentality promoting an adversarial "us versus them" attitude that may result in the use of more force than may be required or justified. Furthermore, many scholars contend that the warrior mentality is often instilled in recruits during their law enforcement academy

training (Hallinan, 2016; Rahr & Rice, 2015; Stoughton, 2015). Few academic studies have examined whether this proposition is accurate or supported by evidence. This study seeks a deeper, more rigorous understanding of how police training professionals conceptualize these mentalities based upon their experiences. It may also yield insights into what police training professionals teach recruits, why they teach specific content, and how such training influences officer's behavior. Of particular interest are the police training professional's perspectives on the impact, or lack thereof, that the warrior or guardian mentalities have on police use of force behavior.

Research Question

I sought to describe how police training personnel perceive the warrior and guardian cognitive metaphor and its function in law enforcement particularly in use of force situations.

RQ1: What influence do Oklahoma police training professionals feel that the warrior and guardian mentalities have on police use of force behavior?

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Cognitive, or conceptual, metaphors are used when individuals apply figurative comparisons, drawing on familiar ideas or concepts to explain new or ambiguous ones. These metaphors enable individuals to interpret new or abstract ideas and phenomena in terms of prior experience, education, or understanding (Thibodeau et al., 2019). The relationship between cognitive metaphors, attitudes, behaviors, and police use of force is grounded in sociological and psychological theories suggesting that attitudes and beliefs

are predictive of behavior (More et al., 2012; Robbins & Judge, 2017; Sample & Warland, 1973).

The theoretical framework for this study was symbolic interaction theory. Rooted in the social sciences, symbolic interaction theory holds that individuals live simultaneously in a natural environment and in a symbolic environment (Aksan et al., 2009). Its foundation lies in how symbolic meanings emerge through interactions, ultimately shaping communication and behavior (Aksan et al., 2009). Sandstrom et al. (2009) emphasize that symbolic interaction theory is distinctive in its focus on the micro-processes by which individuals and groups construct meanings, identities, behaviors, and interactions. This framework supports the present study as it seeks to understand how the symbolic nature of the warrior and the guardian mentalities are understood by police training personnel and how such interpretations may influence an officer's decision-making and behavior.

The term *symbolic interaction* was coined by Blumer in 1937 (Ballis Lal, 1995). Early contributors to the development of symbolic interaction theory include Mead, Dewey, and Cooley (Bulmer, 1984). Symbolic interaction theory emphasizes the actor's perspective, the nature of the social situation, and how behavior develops in consideration of both perspective and context. It has been frequently employed in research seeking to understand how people acquire behaviors, norms, values, and attitudes consistent with the groups to which they belong (Stryker, 1959). Symbolic interaction theory assumes that individuals are capable of reasoning, expressing preferences, and making choices (Ballis Lal, 1995). According to Ballis Lal (1995), researchers applying this framework should

use methodologies that allow participants to speak for themselves, thereby capturing their point of view as the researcher seeks to describe and interpret the phenomenon under study.

Nature of the Study

This research was a qualitative study where I used a phenomenological approach. A phenomenological approach was appropriate as I intended to explore meanings, characterizations, and interpretations of a phenomenon through the perceptions and lived experiences of individuals (see Saldana, 2016; Zikmund, 2003). Additionally, I sought to understand participants' subjective perceptions and meanings within a specific social context (see Fossey et al., 2002; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Specifically, I focused on police training personnel's perceptions of the warrior and guardian mentalities, how these mentalities may influence officer's use of force decisions and behaviors, and how these perspectives converge within the broader context of policing and within the social context of policing and police use of force.

I used in-depth interviews to gather data on the subjective experiences of police training personnel, with the goal of developing a richer understanding of the defining attributes and functions of the warrior and guardian mentalities. This research was centered on the perceptions of Oklahoma police skills training personnel, as they are responsible for training the ranks of law enforcement officers and exert significant influence on the nature and quality of instruction provided.

The specific sample size for this research was not predetermined but was established through data saturation. Data saturation can be assessed using two general

principles. First, data saturation is achieved when no new information emerges, data collection yields no additional insight to the phenomenon studied, no further coding is necessary, and when sufficient data exists to allow replication of the study (Dworkin, 2012; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Second, data saturation may be assessed in terms of richness, which refers to the presence of several layers of meaning that are intricate, nuanced, and substantive. Saunders et al. (2017) emphasized the assessment of data saturation should be aligned with the research question, the research's theoretical approach, and the analytic methodology. They identified four primary methods for determining saturation, each contingent on the researcher's methodological approach and focus. (Saunders et al., 2017). Of relevance to this study was their concept of inductive thematic saturation, which is reached when no new codes or themes emerged during participant interviews with the participants or the analytical process (see Saunders et al., 2017).

An important aspect of attaining data saturation is determining the number of participants needed to achieve data saturation. Because the goal of qualitative research is to understand the participants' experience rather than to generalize the findings, the sample sizes are typically smaller in qualitative research compared to quantitative studies (Dworkin, 2012). Some scholars suggested that 20 to 30 participants are required to achieve saturation when using in depth interviews. (Dworkin, 2012; Mason, 2010). However, sample size must also be considered among other factors, including homogeneity of participants, their expertise, the specificity of the research scope, and the sampling strategy knowledge of the nature of the research, how specific or narrow the scope of the research, and the sampling strategy employed (Hennick & Kaiser, 2021).

Based on their findings, Hennick and Kaiser (2021) reported that nine to 17 interviews were sufficient to achieve data saturation in most qualitative studies they studied. Ellis (2016) noted that when purposive sampling is used in phenomenological research, six to 20 interviews are generally sufficient to achieve data saturation and support a robust study.

The goal of this research was to achieve data saturation rather than meet a predetermined number of interviews. Although only a relatively small sample is anticipated, this is consistent with qualitative methodology, the use of purposive sampling of subject matter experts, the relatively homogenous nature of the group, and the narrow scope of the research question. Data collection through participant interviews were continued until saturation was reached.

The interview participants for this study were drawn from law enforcement training personnel who are certified instructors with the Oklahoma Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training (C.L.E.E.T.). C.L.E.E.T. sets training standards for all local and state law enforcement agencies in the state of Oklahoma (Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training, 2025; Oklahoma Statutes Sec. 70-3311.16, 2024). All police training personnel who deliver instruction qualifies for officers' continuing education must be certified through C.L.E.E.T. Likewise, any instructor teaching at any C.L.E.E.T. certified basic police academy must also be a C.L.E.E.T. certified instructor. To become a certified instructor, candidates must serve as full-time officers for at least 2 years and complete the Basic Instructor Development (B.I.D.) course (Oklahoma Administrative Code, 2022). Police instructors who teach specialized disciplines within

law enforcement are required to complete advanced instructor courses for their discipline, serve in apprenticeship role, and periodically attend refresher courses (Oklahoma Administrative Code, 2022). Some examples of disciplines that require specialized, advanced instructor training are defensive tactics instructors, firearms instructors, and law enforcement driving training instructors. C.L.E.E.T. has a specific set of coursework that must be successfully completed before police instructor candidates are certified to instruct. C.L.E.E.T. has hundreds of certified police instructors throughout the State of Oklahoma.

A purposive sampling method was employed because participants were selected for their knowledge and experience, ensuring content-rich accounts specific to the population and topic under study (see Babbie, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). More specifically, I used both group characteristics sampling and key informant sampling strategies which are often used to assemble an information-rich group capable of providing unique insights and explaining group characteristics (see Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Participants sought for this research were police officers with at least 3 years of experience in law enforcement, who are C.L.E.E.T. certified instructors, who teach at basic police academies in the State of Oklahoma.

The police training personnel who volunteered for this study participated in semistructured interviews. Each interview used the same basic interview questions for each volunteer and utilized tailored follow-up questions to further capture their unique experiences and perceptions. The participants' responses to the interview questions provided the primary data for this study. Each interview was recorded and later

transcribed. After the data was collected, it was transcribed, coded, analyzed, and interpreted to reflect a rich, in-depth understanding of this phenomenon from the perspective of participating police training personnel.

Definitions

The following key terms are important to this study.

Cognitive heuristics: A subconscious set of efficient rules and paradigms that enable individuals to make rapid decisions without taking the time to evaluate all the available information. When the speed is necessary, cognitive heuristics provide a “good-enough” solution but not necessarily an optimal one (Kahneman, 2011; Mears et al., 2017; Seitz et al., 2017).

Cognitive metaphor: The cognitive process in which metaphors are used to understand new, unfamiliar, or abstract concepts. Through this process, individuals rely on concepts or perceptions drawn from past experiences to help explain or interpret something novel, unfamiliar, or ambiguous (Thibodeau et al., 2016).

Cognitive schemas: Working mental rules that provide individuals a systematic way to categorize information for managing situations. Cognitive schemas can function as a behavioral guide when information and time are limited (Bonner, 2015; Morgan et al., 2020).

Guardian: One who guards or has care over another person or their property (Merriam-Webster, 2020).

Mentality: An overarching way of perceiving and reacting to situations in general. Mentality develops through knowledge, logic, norms, values, culture, traditions, and experience (Vorozhbitova & Issina, 2013)

Mindset: A way of thinking, composed of beliefs and attitudes, that orients how one approaches a specific situation. It focuses on situation-specific information, filters out non-essential information, and provides a framework for selecting reasonable courses of action (Klein, 2016).

Orientation: A general or lasting direction of thought, inclination, or interest (Merriam-Webster, 2020).

Symbolic Interaction Theory (S.I.T): A social science theory that holds that individuals live in both a natural and a symbolic environment. S.I.T. examines how symbolic meanings emerge from social interactions, how individuals develop meanings, shaping identities, behaviors and inform future communications and interactions (Aksan, 2009; Sandstrom et al., 2009).

Warrior: One who has been, or is currently, involved in warfare, conflict, or struggle. (Merriam-Webster, 2020).

Assumptions

One assumption I made was that officers who adopt a warrior mentality are both more aggressive and confrontational toward the citizens than officers who align more closely with a guardian mentality (see Stoughton, 2015). A related assumption was that officers who embrace a warrior mentality are more likely to use force and to employ higher levels of force, while officers who espouse a guardian mentality are more likely to

use force less frequently and at lower levels of force (see Stoughton, 2016). This research, in part, sought to examine the accuracy of these assumptions.

Another assumption was that the warrior and guardian mentalities are mutually exclusive attributes within officers. However, recent research challenges this claim, suggesting that officers' orientations may lie along a continuum between the two mentalities rather than existing as mutually exclusive orientations. (see McLean et al., 2018). A further assumption was that when police officers adopt and adhere to the guardian mentality and its' associated principles, communities that have historically experienced strained relationships police, will perceive and recognize these changes and therefore foster increasing mutual understanding and strengthening trust. (see Police Executive Research Forum, 2015; Rahr & Rice, 2015).

In this qualitative study, I focused on the perceptions of police training personnel regarding the influence of warrior or guardian mentalities on officers' use of force. I assumed that the participating police training personnel possess sufficient experience to provide data necessary for the development of emergent themes and to achieve data saturation. I further assumed that these participants would respond candidly and openly about their perceptions and their experiences.

Scope and Delimitations

Numerous factors influence officer use of force decisions and behavior, including officer characteristics, socialization mechanisms, organizational culture, suspect characteristics, situational factors, and neighborhood dynamics. I focused on one specific aspect of the police socialization process. Existing literature suggests that much police

behavior develops through socialization in police academy training, in police field training, and through in-service training (Rahr & Rice, 2015; Stoughton, 2015; Terry & Hogg, 2000). Several authors also noted that the first time that new officers are exposed to the realities of police work is upon attending the basic police academy (Dempsey et al., 2019; Schmallegger, 2019). Some researchers further hypothesized that the so-called “warrior problem” may have origins in police academy training (Hallinan, 2016; Rahr & Rice, 2015; Stoughton, 2015; Stoughton, 2014).

I examined the lived experiences of police training personnel and their perceptions of how warrior and guardian mentalities may influence officers’ use of force behavior. Developing a deeper understanding of how police trainers interpret these mentalities may provide insight into how they train future officers and the rationale behind their instructional choices. In turn, these findings may inform decision makers, support positive social change, and guide the development of future policy and best practices.

Limitations

The limitations of this study were consistent with those commonly associated with qualitative research. These include subjectivity in both the participant’s responses and in the researcher’s interpretation of the data, the absence of statistical representation, and an inability to demonstrate causality. Another limitation concern generalizability. This study was conducted in the south-central region of the United States, an area that is typically characterized as conservative, individualistic, and usually pro-police in its attitude toward law enforcement. Consequently, the views of the police personnel in this

region may differ from those in other areas of the country. In addition, several participants in this study come from departments with fewer than 600 sworn officers. The perspectives of officers from small to medium sized departments may not align with those from larger department. Furthermore, this region experiences moderate to low crime rates, which may also influence officers' attitudes and behaviors. Given these factors, findings from this study may be generalizable to departments with similar characteristics, but care should be exercised to avoid over generalization.

An additional limitation in this research involved encouraging police training personnel to agree to participate in the study and interviews. Police culture is often described as insular and resistant to outside inquiry (Peak & Sousa, 2017; Schmallegger, 2015). Additionally, officers may be hesitant to be recorded. However, my background in law enforcement may help to mitigate this barrier, as the shared professional identity between current and former officers may foster trust and willingness to participate.

Significance

Although tension between police and marginalized communities has existed for decades, these tensions have intensified in recent years. Several highly publicized incidents have garnered national attention through extensive media coverage and have raised concerns about racial discrimination, excessive use of force, police militarization, and questions of police legitimacy (Lee et al., 2010). Events in Ferguson, Missouri, New York City, and Baltimore, Maryland, demonstrated how allegations and perceptions of excessive use of force severely damage the relationship between police departments and

the communities they serve. These examples underscore the importance of understanding the dynamics and contributing factors involved in use of force incidents.

Understanding the variables that influence police use of force incidents is crucial for minimizing such incidents and improving police-community relationships. Within this context, some scholars have hypothesized that police training and culture may foster a warrior mentality, one that predisposes officers to adopt an adversarial “us versus them” perspective in which people are viewed as an ‘enemy’ to be overcome (Stoughton, 2015). Others suggest that shifting the focus of law enforcement training toward a guardian orientation may improve community trust and reduce a reliance on force (McLean et al., 2018).

Finally, in recent years, police credibility and legitimacy have been further questioned due to several high-profile incidents deemed excessive by many. This reflects Peel’s principles that the ability of the police to perform their duties is conditional upon public approval, and that public cooperation diminishes as force is increasingly employed (Law Enforcement Action Partnership, 2021). Research that deepens understanding of the factors influencing police use of force can inform police policies, improve training, and facilitate raising public awareness. In this way, the present study contributed to positive social change by providing insight into police instructors’ perceptions of the warrior and guardian mentalities and their potential influence on police officers’ use of force. Additionally, it offered an academic contribution to the improvement of police training, thereby better preparing officers to serve their communities effectively.

Summary

The legal ability use of force is a defining characteristic of the law enforcement profession. While lawful and appropriate in most circumstances, the inappropriate use of force or even the perception of excessive force by the police has proven to be a deeply divisive issue between law enforcement and the communities they serve. This qualitative study was undertaken to contribute to the existing body of research by enhancing the understanding of the factors that influence when, and how, force is employed by police officers. Using a phenomenological approach, I explored how an officers' orientation toward a guardian or warrior mentality may shape their use of force decision-making, as understood through the lived experiences of police training personnel. In doing so, I also addressed the validity of the hypothesis that officers are increasingly being trained as warriors rather than guardians, and consequently more likely to employ force, including force at higher levels.

This study was grounded in symbolic interaction theory, which emphasizes the individual's perspective, the nature of the social situation, and how the actions are developed in relation to both. This theoretical framework is frequently applied to understand how individuals acquire behaviors, norms, values, and attitudes through social interaction.

In this chapter, I defined the scope of the study, outlined assumptions related to the research topic, such as the belief that officers who more strongly oriented with a warrior mentality are more aggressive and more likely to use force than those who are oriented toward a guardian mentality, and identified assumptions about the researcher

including issues of bias. Limitations, including the restricted generalization to larger populations, and the significance of this study, have also been discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The complex and often controversial relationship between police use of force and community relations is well documented and remains a critical issue in modern policing (Hickman et al., 2008; Lentz & Chaires, 2006). Numerous academic studies have examined the many variables that influence police use of force and the impact that force has on community relationships (Bolger, 2015; Kramer & Remster, 2018; Lee et al., 2010). Prior research typically categorizes these variables as suspect characteristics, officer characteristics, situational factors, and contextual factors when evaluating use of force incidents (Bonner, 2015; Bolger, 2015). According to this perspective, exposure to metaphors such as the “war on drugs” and the “war on crime” fosters an adversarial worldview in which officers may consciously or subconsciously begin to perceive citizens as an enemy to be defeated. The assumed consequence of this perspective hypothesizes that officers adopting a warrior mentality are more inclined to use force, or to use force more aggressively, than officers oriented toward a guardian mentality (Rahr & Rice, 2015; Stoughton, 2014, 2015).

In this chapter, I provide the theoretical foundation for this research and describe how the major tenets of that framework apply to this study. I also outline the conceptual framework and define key terms such as warrior, guardian, mindset, and mentality as used with this study. In addition, I explore related concepts his chapter also explores related concepts such as attitudes, beliefs, cognitive heuristics, schemas, police operational styles, and culture as factors in police behavior and decision making. Chapter

2 concludes by examining other variables and conditions associated with use of force decisions.

Restatement of Problem Statement and Purpose

A substantial body of research has explored numerous variables believed to contribute to police use of force (Bolger, 2015; Brandl & Strostine, 2012; Kahn et al., 2017, Klahm & Tillyer, 2010; Morgan et al., 2020; Paoline III et al., 2016; Terrill & Mastrofsky, 2002). One contemporary hypothesis holds that police officers are being trained to adopt a warrior mentality, which shapes how they interact with the public during patrol. This theory suggests that although police officers may be initially trained to use a warrior mindset in life-threatening circumstances, this restricted reactionary orientation has expanded into a generalized warrior mentality (Stoughton, 2015). Officers who internalize this mentality are thought to behave more aggressively. It is suggested that the police warrior mentality is reinforced by metaphors such as the *war on drugs* and the *war on crime*. Such framing may lead police officers to view citizens as the enemy to be subdued rather than individuals to be protected (Stoughton, 2015). Consequently, the warrior mentality is hypothesized to increase the likelihood of using force, using higher levels of force than necessary, or using force excessively. In contrast, proponents of the guardian mentality argue that training emphasizing citizens' value and protection would result in less frequent and less severe use of force. (Rahr & Rice, 2015; Stoughton, 2014; Stoughton, 2015).

What remains unclear is whether the proposed link between the warrior and guardian mentalities and police use of force is rhetorical or empirically measurable. A

recent study by McLean et al (2018) indicated that the warrior and guardian mindsets can indeed be empirically measured. Their findings further indicated that these orientations were not mutually exclusive but rather exist on a continuum, with most officers exhibiting elements of both. They further found correlations between officers' mindset and their behavior, particularly when officers identified strongly with one end of the continuum or the other (McLean et al., 2018).

Despite these findings, there is little research that has examined how police officer's identification with the warrior or guardian mentality influences behavior, discretion, or use of force decision making. Key questions remain largely unanswered: (a) Are police officers aware of aligning themselves with either a warrior or guardian mentality? (b) How do officers and trainers conceptualize warrior and guardian mentalities? (c) How are these mentalities learned or developed within policing? and (d) To what extent do police officers behave in ways consistent with their alignment with a warrior or guardian mentality in comparison to how behavior is predicated by other factors in daily police work?

In this qualitative study, I sought to explore how police trainers understand the concepts of a warrior or guardian mentality and the influence of those mentalities on police behavior. I provide insight into the veracity of the purported warrior and guardian mentality in police officers and insight into the function of these mentalities and mindsets in police work (see McLean et al., 2018). The findings from this study add to the body of research providing a richer understanding of the warrior and guardian mentalities from the perspective of law enforcement officers, inform police training, support the work of

future police policymakers, and expanding the body of knowledge regarding the nature of the contributing factors germane to police use of force. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine police trainers' perceptions of the warrior and guardian mentalities with conceptualize the warrior and guardian mentalities, as well as to better assess the potential influence these orientations may have on law enforcement officer's self-concept and behavior.

Literature Search Strategy

The information for this topic was primarily obtained through various databases located in the Walden University Library, the Oklahoma Wesleyan Library, and the Wiley Online Library. Databases used included, but are not limited to Proquest, Ebscohost, Sage Journals, and Google Scholar. In addition, numerous criminal justice and law enforcement textbooks from Pearson, Cengage, Routledge, Oxford University Press, University of Chicago Press, and Waveland were used. Key terms and phrases used to locate information for this review include, but were not limited to: *Warrior*, *guardian*, *policing styles*, *police culture*, *use of force*, *attitude and behavior*, *police culture*, and *police behavior*.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework for this study was the symbolic interaction theory. Rooted in the social sciences, symbolic interaction theory holds that individuals live simultaneously in a natural environment and in a symbolic environment (Aksan et al., 2009). Its foundation lies in how symbolic meanings emerge through interactions, ultimately shaping communication and behavior (Aksan et al., 2009). Sandstrom et al

(2009) emphasized that symbolic interaction theory is distinctive in its focus on the micro-processes by which individuals and groups construct meanings, identities, behaviors, and interactions. This framework supports the present study as I sought to understand how the symbolic nature of the warrior and the guardian mentalities are understood by police training personnel and how such interpretations may influence an officer's decision-making and behavior.

The purpose of this study was to develop a better appreciation of how police training personnel conceptualize the warrior and guardian mentalities, as well as generating a richer understanding of the potential influence these mentalities may have on law enforcement behavior. Specifically, I examined the perspectives of police trainers within the social context of enforcing the law. I explored how police trainers understand and interpret the warrior and guardian mentalities, how these mentalities are developed, and how affiliation with either mentality may influence officer behavior.

The purpose of this study is consistent with the claims of symbolic interaction theory which asserts that meanings are derived by the reciprocal interactions of individuals within their social environments, and behaviors are best understood by examining the meanings, definitions, and processes formed in these interactions (see Aksan et al., 2009). Symbolic interaction theory emphasizes the individual's perspective of a situation and how behavior emerges as a product of their perspective. This theory is particularly relevant to this research as it provides a framework for examining how law enforcement trainers conceptualize and define the warrior and guardian orientations. Once the meanings and values attributed to these orientations are understood, it becomes

possible to better assess how officers' behaviors may be influenced by identification with either mentality.

Conceptual Framework

High profile incidents in Ferguson, Missouri; New York City, York; Baltimore Maryland; and Minneapolis, Minnesota illustrate how allegations and perceptions of excessive use of force seriously erode the relationship between the police departments and their communities. These examples underscore the importance of understanding the dynamics of use of force incidents and the contributory factors underlying them. By examining these variables, researchers and practitioners may identify strategies to reduce the occurrence of such incidents, thereby strengthening relationships between law enforcement and the public.

Within this context that some scholars have hypothesized that police training and culture contribute to the cultivation of a warrior mentality, which predisposes officers to adopt a confrontational 'us versus them' orientation in which people are perceived as an "enemy" to be overcome (Stoughton, 2015). According to this view, officers with a warrior orientation are not only more likely to use force but are also more likely to apply higher levels of force than necessary or legally justified. In response, others argue that law enforcement training should emphasize the guardian mentality, which frames police work a relational and service oriented (Rahr & Rice, 2015; Stoughton, 2015). Advocates contend that promoting a guardian mentality can enhance community trust, reduce unnecessary use of force, and foster healthier police and community relationships (McLean et al., 2018).

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

Defining the Warrior and Guardian Mindsets

To better understand how these mindsets and mentalities may correlate to an officer's psyche and potential behavior, it is necessary to examine the definitions and nuances of the terms *warrior* and *guardian*. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2020), the term *warrior* specifically denotes one who has either experienced war or one who has been engaged in warfare. More generally, it may also describe someone involved in a conflict or struggle. The term *guardian* is defined as one who guards, or who has the care over another person or their property (Merriam-Webster, 2020). While these definitions provide a literal foundation, they fail to capture the metaphorical meanings of these terms when applied to policing.

Thibodeau et al (2016) examined how metaphors shape understanding of unfamiliar concepts. Their work described how people use metaphors to understand unfamiliar or new phenomena. The role of metaphors in explanation is the cognitive process that allows the individual to understand and reason through new or unfamiliar concepts by considering them under familiar cognitive representation (Thibodeau et al., 2016). Part of their research explored how individuals interpret the terms warrior and guardian in both neutral contexts and when applied specifically to police officers. In the first phase of their study, participants generated descriptive attributes for each term, resulting in two sets of lists. One list for the general application of the terms in a neutral context and one list when the terms were applied to a law enforcement context. While the descriptors themselves did not change dramatically between contexts, the rank ordering

of descriptors and the emotional valence shifted. For example, warrior, in a neutral context, was most often associated with being strong, brave, and fearless; whereas, when applied to police, the top descriptors became strong, aggressive, and fighting. Thus, in neutral usage, warrior carried a predominately positive emotional connotation, but in the police context, it evoked more negative associations. Importantly, participants' descriptions of warrior in relation to police correlated with their prior experiences with law enforcement and were predictive of their overall attitudes toward police (Thibodeau et al., 2016). Their work is beneficial toward understanding how cognitive metaphors work, how the attributes of the terms warrior and guardian are more expansive than their strict dictionary definitions. Additionally, the emotional valence of the defining attributes varies according to how the terms are applied, and in the context of the individual's experience, with the metaphor's target.

Recent research has attempted to further define the constructs of a warrior mindset and a guardian mindset to learn if the influence of these concepts can be empirically measured. McLean et al. (2018) asserted that officers with a warrior orientation emphasize officer safety and fighting crime as their primary mission. Such officers tend to view themselves as soldiers on the front line of a battle against crime, a thin line between good and evil (McLean et al., 2018; Stoughton, 2015). Moreover, warrior-oriented officers may elevate their professional identity to a status incomprehensible to outsiders, where no one can understand what they know or do except for fellow officers. This perspective can foster an attitude of being beyond reproach by a "know-nothing public" (McLean et al., 2018; Worden, 1995).

At the other end of the spectrum is the proposed alternative, the guardian mentality or guardian orientation. Proponents of the guardian mentality hold that guardian officers prioritize service over enforcement, focusing on trust-building as central to effective policing (McLean et al., & Stoughton, 2016). Such officers are believed to see their role as protectors of society rather than enforcers of law (McLean et al., 2018; Rahr & Rice, 2015; Stoughton, 2015). Some scholars argue the guardian mentality is more noble. In contrast to the warrior mentality, it is believed to cultivate better attitudes and foster more constructive officer behaviors in law enforcement which are more conducive to building public support and trust (McLean et al., 2018).

Attempting to define the constructs of the warrior mindset, warrior mentality, guardian mindset, and guardian mentality and the impact these orientations may have on officer behavior has met mixed results within law enforcement circles. The warrior mindset is frequently associated with officer safety. It is often defined as the mental fortitude to never give up, to prevail against the odds, and to stay alive no matter what aggression they are faced with especially in dangerous or deadly situations (Van Brocklin, 2019). Others argue that police officers are both warriors and guardians and will operate in the mindset dictated by the situational circumstance (Blake, 2016). Other researchers suggest that the characteristics of the officer's beat will also determine which mindset will be more predominant. Officers working in areas that have low crime rates will more likely operate with guardian-oriented strategies, whereas officers working in high crime areas may be more likely to operate with a more warrior-like orientation (Cullum, 2016). Finally, some officers dismiss the distinction as merely one of semantics,

arguing that whether one calls the police warriors or guardians does not truly matter as both orientations share similar qualities and both will use force when deemed necessary (Schwartz, 2015).

Differentiating Between Mindset and Mentality

To better understand the significance of the warrior and guardian mentalities, it is necessary to distinguish between the terms mindset and mentality. Stoughton (2015) noted though they are similar, they are significantly distinctive. In its' strictest sense, he defines the warrior mindset as the mental determination and commitment to survival in life-threatening situations. Stoughton stated that a warrior mindset is appropriate for survival in life-threatening situations. However, he argues that the situation-specific warrior mindset has morphed into a generalized warrior mentality in which officers perceive ever-present danger in every interaction. Consequently, officers operating under this mentality maintain a constant state of elevated tactical alertness believing they must always be prepared for immanent threats (Stoughton, 2015). Unlike the context-specific warrior mindset, the warrior mentality represents an overarching persona of perceiving and reacting at all times. Critics contend that officers who strongly identify with this mentality are more likely to use force and that the warrior mentality, and the warrior mindset to a lesser degree, undermine community policing and damage community relationships (Rahr & Rice, 2015; Stoughton, 2015).

Other scholars support Stoughton's distinctions. Klein (2016) described a mindset as a way of thinking, comprised of beliefs and attitudes, that frames a situation and directs attention to relevant information. A mindset additionally serves as an information

filter and provides a reasonable course of action (Klein, 2016). In contrast, researchers Vorozhbitove and Issina (2013) defined the more encompassing aspects of mentality stating it is a broader more stable form of cognition determined not just by individual consciousness, but that it is also by collective factors such as knowledge, logic, norms, values, culture, traditions, and historical experiences (Vorozhbitove & Issina, 2013).

Recognizing the distinction between a mindset and a mentality raises an important question for this study. Do the police trainers and officers recognize, and accept the differentiation, between the two terms or are the terms used interchangeably? This distinction matters. Based on the definitions, it may be appropriate for an officer to utilize a warrior mindset in a life-threatening encounter with an armed suspect, yet inappropriate for an officer to adopt a generalized warrior mentality that guides their approach to daily policing.

Factors Associated with Mentalities and Behavior

The Impact of Attitudes and Beliefs on Behavior

A central aspect of the discourse contrasting warrior and guardian mentalities lies in the belief that officers who strongly identify with the warrior mindset or mentality, are more likely to act in ways consistent with their identification. Consequently, such officers may be more inclined to use force more frequently and at higher levels than situationally required. This philosophy is rooted in the premise that current attitudes direct future behavior. While this premise may appear *prima facie* accurate, the correlation between beliefs and attitudes as predictive variables of future behavior is significantly more complex.

Scholars have questioned the strength of the predictive relationship between attitude and behavior along several points. The complexity of attitudes is revealed in their subcomponents: cognition, affect, and behavioral intent. Cognition involves the formation of value statements, affect represents the emotional or feeling component, and behavioral intent reflects the predisposition to act a certain way (Breckler, 1984). Attitudes may be informed by beliefs accessible in one's memory, which are themselves influenced by motivation and the individual's access to attitude-relevant information (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2011). Additional factors such as situational cues, personality, situational variables, normative restraints, and personal vested interest all further complicate the predictive strength of the attitude to behavior relationship (Zanna, 1990). Finally, the predictive strength of the relationship between attitude and future behavior is increased when the attitude is supported by an ingroup norm, easy to recall, and supported by direct experience (Glasman & Albarracin, 2006; Terry & Hogg, 2000).

Cognitive Heuristics, Schemas, and Behavior

Another critical factor in understanding how mentalities influence behavior is the role of cognitive heuristics. Research on cognition indicates that in situations requiring rapid decision making, individuals are more apt to use a cognitive shortcut, or heuristic, to be able to think quickly (Mears et al., 2017). Cognitive heuristics are subconscious sets of efficient rules and paradigms that enable an individual to make a fast, efficient decision without processing all available information (Kahneman, 2011; Seitz et al., 2017). Although cognitive heuristics provide satisficing solutions, cognitive heuristics are but not always optimal (Mears et al., 2017; Seitz et al., 2016). Typically, they are

ecologically rational, memory-based perceptions, and simple to use in the absence of time or complete information, and powerful enough to demonstrate both good and poor reasoning (Seitz et al., 2016). This form of decision-making is useful in quickly evolving, dangerous, or life-threatening situations. However, cognitive heuristics have some susceptibility to biases and errors. These biases can include inaccurate original informational inputs, recency bias, confirmation bias, availability errors, and personal predispositions (Mears et al., 2017).

Applied to the warrior mentality, cognitive heuristics may predispose officers to process information and react in ways consistent with the metaphorical framework of the warrior orientation, particularly in dangerous or high stress situations.

A related cognitive process is the development of schemas. Schemas are mental processes that categorize previously gained information to be used in the future (Bonner, 2015). The use of cognitive schemas provides officers a systematic way to categorize information to develop, and use, working rules for managing situations. The working rules, or schemas, help officers frame or interpret a current situation based on past experiences and, lacking new or unique information, aid in guiding the current decision-making process (Bonner, 2015). Cognitive schemas can function as a behavioral guide when information and time are limited or incomplete (Morgan et al., 2020).

Whereas cognitive heuristics are applied in dynamic situations, cognitive schemas are more generalized allowing for greater analysis of available information and are used more frequently throughout daily life (Gigerenzer, 2011; Wyer & Radvansky, 1999). Consequently, cognitive schemas may influence behavior across both warrior or guardian

mentalities, serving as a framework through which officers interpret and act in various circumstances.

Operational Styles of Police

The debate surrounding the warrior and guardian mentalities, and subsequent associative behaviors, parallels previous studies on police officer's operational styles. One important purpose for analyzing police styles is to understand the potential connections between the officer's operational style and how the officers do their job. Perhaps one of the most well-known studies on police operational styles is James Q. Wilson's seminal work *Varieties of Police Behavior*. In this classic study, Wilson identifies the Legalistic style, the Watchman style, and the Service style as three distinctive styles of police behavior (Wilson, 1978). He hypothesized that officers who employed a Legalistic Style of policing tended to enforce the letter of the law frequently issuing numerous citations and making many arrests for minor crimes. Officers who used the Watchmen Style of policing were primarily concerned with order maintenance within their beat, used a great deal of discretion to solve problems, and in solving problems in their beat they may or may not use legal means to gain compliance. Finally, the officers who utilized the Service Style of policing were focused on serving the needs of the community and viewed themselves as helpers rather than enforcers (Dempsey & Forst, 2014; Wilson, 1978). Working to further capture the nuances of various operational styles, researchers have developed other descriptive operational styles along other various dimensions. Larry Siegal and Joseph Senna combined elements from both Muir and Wilson to develop their four basic style typologies of the Crime Fighter, Social Agent,

Law Enforcer, and the Watchmen (Siegel & Senna, 2007). John Broderick examined police styles along the dimensions of the officer's emphasis on due process and the need for social order. He also noted that some officers were more oriented toward enforcing laws while others saw themselves as public servants. Broderick advanced four police styles that he identified as Enforcers, Idealists, Realists, and Optimists (Broderick, 1987). William Muir believed that an officer's style was premised on their orientation across the two attitudes of passion and perspective. In this case, passion is related to the officer's willingness to use coercion to attain job-related objectives while perspective measured the willingness and ability of officers to empathize with people they encountered while on duty (Muir Jr., 1979). Based on these two dimensions, Muir purports that officers will typically fall into one of the following styles: the Professional, the Enforcer, the Reciprocator, and the Avoider (Muir Jr., 1979). Finally, Michael Brown examined policing styles assessing the officer's selectivity of enforcement and their aggressiveness on the street. From his research, Brown developed the typologies of Old-style Crime Fighter, Clean Beat Crime Fighter, Service Style I and Service Style II, and the Professional style (Brown, 1981).

The salient aspect of the discussion of policing styles with the current issue of the warrior and guardian mentalities is the similarity between several of the distinct styles and the contemporary discussion of the warrior and guardian mentalities. Specifically, within each of the groups previously defined by researchers, there are typically two styles that share defining characteristics that are consistent with characteristics found in the warrior or guardian mentality. Upon closer examination, Wilson's Watchmen style,

Muir's Enforcer, Broderick's Enforcer, and Brown's Old-school Crime Fighter share characteristics often associated with the warrior mentality. These characteristics include the ideas that real police work is enforcing the law and maintaining order, the development of an "us versus them" or a "good versus evil" mentality, and legitimate or illegitimate coercion may be necessary to obtain law enforcement objectives (Broderick, 1987; Brown 1981; Muir Jr., 1979; Wilson, 1978,). Similarly, Wilson's Service style, Muir's Reciprocator, Broderick's Optimist, Brown's Service Style I, and Siegal and Senna's Social Agent share many commonalities often associated with the guardian mentality. These attributes include placing a high value on people, officers seeing themselves as public servants, focusing on the needs of the community, hesitant to use force unless it is a last resort, placing a high value on individual rights and due process, and a sensitivity to community needs (Broderick, 1987; Brown 1981; Muir Jr., 1979; Wilson, 1978; Paoline III, 2004).

Police Culture

In 2015, the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing recommended that one way trust and legitimacy could be improved between communities and police departments is to change police culture. Specifically, they recommended shifting police culture from a warrior orientation to a guardian orientation (Rahr & Rice, 2015). This sentiment is echoed by Seth Stoughton who suggests that police culture has embraced a warrior ethos in which officers envision themselves in a never-ending battle between good and evil, fighting a war on drugs, a war on crime, in which the Thin Blue Line is all that stands between civilization and chaos (Stoughton, 2015). This highlights another

facet of the warrior mentality and guardian mentality discussion, are these mentalities instilled as a part of police culture, or are they developed at the individual level?

Researchers Paoline III and Gau (2017) define an occupational culture as “the attitudes, values, and norms that are transmitted and shared among groups of individuals in an effort to collectively cope with the common problems and conditions members face”. Early research on police culture widely described it as monolithic, in which police officers were described as a homogeneous group, stressing central tendencies such as preoccupation with order, aggressive law enforcement, authoritarian, suspicious, secretive, cynical, pragmatic, isolated, and conservative (Paoline III & Gau, 2017; Worden, 1995). Other research, such as studies evaluating policing styles, indicate that there are more varied attitudes about the role of law enforcement, how they accomplish law enforcement objectives, and officer’s views of citizens indicating a police culture with more diverse subcultures in contrast to a monolithic model (Paoline III, 2004). Scholars assessing multiple attitudinal outlooks among officers, researchers found some attitudinal heterogeneity among the officers (Paoline III & Gau, 2017). Moreover, they noted that while the officer's attitudes tended to cluster around seven distinctive styles or orientations, they also clustered around some of the central tenets of the monolithic model (Paoline III & Gau, 2017; Paoline III, 2004). These findings seem to indicate while there are some shared commonalities within the police culture, individual officers vary considerably along attitudinal lines. These findings were supported by Ingram et al. (2018) in their work assessing the impact that police culture has on police behavior. Their study indicated that as a collective, officers within departments that have an aggressive

policing culture, use more force, and higher levels of force, than do officers in departments that do not have an aggressive policing culture (Ingram et al., 2018). Although their results indicated that culture had an influence on use of force behavior, they also cautioned that decisions made at the individual level were still significant (Ingram et al., 2018). These studies have important implications in the warrior and guardian mentality discussion. If a police department's culture is becoming more militaristic, developing warrior mentalities within its' officers, then it is a reasonable assumption that such a department would likely embrace a more aggressive law enforcement culture. Subsequently, there may be a correlated increase in police use of force and greater degrees of force used. Moreover, if at the individual level, officers see their role as warriors, it would be plausible to observe more aggressive patrol tactics and potentially corresponding increases in use of force and the levels of force used. A point to also be considered in this proposition is; Are officers who support aggressive policing cultures and patrol tactics using force more frequently and at higher levels because the officers themselves are more aggressive warriors, or is it because more aggressive cultures and patrol tactics lead to officers coming into contact with more criminals, arrests situations, and combative suspects than departments and officers who do not have an aggressive culture or patrol behavior?

Previous research and subsequent findings have indicated some similarities with warrior and guardian orientation research conducted by McLean and associates, which found that the two mindsets exist, are measurable, and vary in strength (McLean, 2019). They also observed that officers could possess both mindsets and that they are not

mutually exclusive (McLean et al., 2018). Consider a scale in which the guardian and warrior mindsets were on opposite ends of the scale. According to McLean et al. (2017), an officer's orientation can lie, or move, anywhere within scale whereby the magnitude of the officer's orientation is mutable.

An important question raised by these findings, as it relates to police culture, is whether the warrior and guardian mentalities are the result of cultural socialization, training, or combination thereof. A significant part of this debate centers around the answer to this question. If these opposing mindsets are a product of cultural socialization or training, and especially if community trust, police legitimacy, and the use of force are outcomes moderated by the two mentalities, then understanding the dynamics of police culture, the socialization process, and training become paramount as underlying elements that need to be better understood.

Contributing Variables in Police Use of Force

The role of the police, and the definition of their responsibilities, are difficult to define due to the vast array of tasks undertaken by police officers (Klahm IV & Tillyer, 2010). However, one of the more defining aspects of police work, particularly when it comes to public relations and the local community, is the use of force (Bolger, 2015). Practitioners, scholars, and policymakers all want greater insight into when, why, and to what extent police use force in the performance of their duties (Mears et al., 2017). When examining police use of force, the contributory variables are often grouped under the three broad categories of suspect variables, officer variables, and encounter or situational variables. (Bolger, 2015; Girgenti-Malone et al., 2017).

Suspect variables

Under the influence. Suspects with a history of substance abuse or thought to be under the influence of intoxicants are more likely to have force used against them (Bolger, 2015; Morgan et al., 2020). What is not clear from studies is what specific factors related to suspected intoxication account for the increased likelihood of force being utilized. For example, is the increased likelihood of force being used due to intoxicated subjects being more belligerent or non-cooperative, being perceived as more dangerous than a sober person, combative, or the increased likelihood of an intoxicated person being involved in criminal activity than sober subject.

Demeanor. Numerous studies have attempted to assess the impact that a suspect's demeanor toward officers has on the officer's behavior such as deciding to arrest or to use force. The results of these studies have been mixed (Klahm IV & Tillyer, 2010). Researchers Garner et al. (2006) quantitative meta-analysis of previous research assessing characteristics associated with police use of force indicates that a suspect's disrespectfulness or antagonism toward the police is associated with an increased likelihood of force being used by the police. Other studies also indicate that police were more likely to use forceful measures when a citizen involved was disrespectful (Crow & Adrion, 2011; Kaminski et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2010). However, some research suggests that the suspect's demeanor does not influence a police officer's decision to use force (Terrill & Mastrofsky, 2002). Other research asserts that a suspect's demeanor may not be a significant variable when other legal and extra-legal variables are controlled (Morgan et al., 2020).

Age. Younger subjects were more likely to have force used against them than older subjects (Morgan et al., 2020). This may be due to youthful involvement in crime, criminality decreasing as subjects age, perceptions of the increased potential for violence by younger suspects, or capacity for resistance with younger subjects (Chambliss et al., 2017; Morgan et al., 2020). However, other research indicates the suspect's age is unrelated to use of force when other variables such as resistive behaviors, disrespectful attitude, or seriousness of the crime are controlled (Kaminski et al., 2004).

Gender. Consistent across numerous studies, force is more often used against males at a significantly disproportionate rate compared to females (Bolger, 2015; Klahm IV & Tillyer, 2010; Morgan et al., 2020). Various theories have attempted to explain this disparity. Some explanations include that males are more likely to be involved in violent crime and therefore more apt to have force used against them by the police (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2020; Morgan et al., 2020). Males are considered more blameworthy or dangerous (Morgan et al., 2020), or that police are more lenient with female suspects in comparison to male suspects (Pollack, 1950).

Race. A particularly salient variable is race, given the historically antagonistic relationship between minority groups and police as well as current events unfolding in the wake of George Floyd's death. A plethora of research exists attempting to assess the relationship between a subject's race and police use of force, but to date, the findings have been inconsistent (Bolger, 2015; Bonner, 2015; Klahm IV & Tillyer, 2010). Some research indicates that African American subjects are more frequently subjected to police use of force, or greater levels of force, than non-minority subjects even when other

variables that contribute to police use of force, such as suspect resistance, perception of intoxication, or demeanor are controlled for (Terrill & Mastrofsky, 2002). Using Deference Exchange Theory as the basis for their research, Paoline et al. (2016) found that white officers were more likely to use force, and more likely to use a greater amount of force, against a black suspect than a white suspect. Some research indicates that minority subjects may be more likely to be initially subjected to coercive actions than white subjects during the early parts of an interaction with law enforcement. However, the same study also suggested that that the magnitude of force used increased significantly more for white suspects than minority suspects over time as the encounter continued (Kahn et al., 2017). Possible explanations for this may include that since minority suspects were subjected to a higher level of force early in the encounter, there was not much room in the use of force continuum to increase the level of force, over time, possibly indicating a ceiling effect. Another explanation may include that over time more specific information or observable suspect actions come to light resulting in the officers using force in response to direct actions rather than possible latent bias (Kahn et al., 2017). Kahn and Martin stated that there is an abundance of research and literature supporting the presence of racial disparity between minority groups and their white counterparts within the criminal justice system. However, understanding why that disparity exists is much more complex and unlikely merely a matter of racial prejudice or biased policing by law enforcement (Kahn & Martin, 2016). Much of the ongoing debate assessing the impact of race and policing is trying to understand to what degree of racial disparity is a result of officer attitudes and how much is due to other variables that covary

with race (Goff & Kahn, 2012). For example, if African-Americans are arrested at rates significantly higher than Caucasians, or than their representation in the general population, is that due to officer bias, policies with disparate impacts on minorities, lack of access to education and employment, or African-Americans committing more crimes than Caucasian people? There is a substantive body of research that indicates that the effects of race in use of force are mitigated or eliminated when other covariates, such as suspect's level of resistance, suspicion of intoxication, demeanor are controlled (Garner et al., 2006; Klahm IV & Tillyer, 2010; Lee et al., 2010).

Officer variables

Every year police officers have many contacts with the members of the communities they serve. In a typical year, police officers make 50-61 million contacts with citizens for various reasons (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2020; Schmallegger, 2019). Between 2015 and 2018, officers threatened to use force, or used force, in 1.6% – 2.0% of all contacts (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2020). Comparatively to overall police contacts, police use of force is a rare event (Brandl & Strohshine, 2012; Dempsey et al., 2019; Ross, 2018). Even so, in research evaluating factors contributory to use of force, officer's characteristics have been shown to be significantly correlated with police use of force decisions, but to a much lesser degree than suspect characteristics or encounter characteristics (Bolger, 2015).

Organizational factors. Although organizational factors are not typically considered part of the officer's personal characteristics, it warrants a brief mention since organizational factors such as culture, training, and trust or distrust of leadership have

been correlated to an officer's decision to use of force (Ingram et al., 2018; Le et al., 2010). It has long been established in organizational behavior studies that the organizational culture, its' leadership, management, and various groups within the organization all have influence over individual good citizenship and individual behavior through formal power or informal peer pressure (Vito et al., 2019). Research has indicated that when a law enforcement organization has effective supervision and accountability structures in place, they have a mitigating effect on excessive use of force (Lee & Vaughn, 2010). Lee and Vaughn (2010) also suggest that when managerial disorganization in the areas of division of labor, chain of command, and communication is present there is a greater propensity for unnecessary use of force by line officers.

Not surprisingly, a department's size may have an indirect effect on a police officer's use of force behavior. Larger departments tend to have a greater hierarchal structure and less informal relationships with between the officers, supervisors, and differing divisions. Moreover, officers in large departments are less likely to develop informal relationships with the people in their communities. Research has demonstrated a correlation between the informal relationships and an officer's use of force behaviors, finding that officers in larger departments with less informal relationships use more force than smaller departments or those departments with more informal relationships (Silver et al., 2017).

The climate, or culture, of a law enforcement organization may also be influenced by external factors such as the ecological characteristics of the city (Parker et al., 2005). Police departments that service areas with high crime rates tend to have higher incidents

of police use of force (Hickman & Piquero, 2009). Moreover, the ecological characteristics of the area being patrolled, also influence the policing and enforcement styles adopted by local agencies which impacts the use of force by officers (Stoudt et al., 2011). Departments who embrace more aggressive policing styles, such as Zero Tolerance or Broken Windows models, tend to have more aggressive interactions with citizens, more arrests, and higher incidents of police use of force (Hickman & Piquero, 2009; Stoudt et al., 2011). Research has been divided on whether the presence of police unions within a department increases or decreases the incidents of use of force within the department. Some research indicates that departments that have a police union have higher incidents of police use of force suggesting that the union protects the police even when they use force inappropriately (Parker et al., 2005). However, Hickman and Piquero (2009) submit that the presence of police unions lowers police use of force incidents.

Finally, organizational factors that help mitigate police use of force include agencies where officers have longer tenures, agencies that utilize a Field Training Officer program, agencies that promote in-service training (Hickman & Piquero, 2009), agencies that have national accreditation (Parker et al., 2005), and law enforcement organizations that maintain updated policies and best training practices (Rockwell et al., 2020).

Experience. Research into the influence of officer experience on the officer's decision to use force has yielded mixed results. One meta-analysis on officer experience as a predictive correlate to use of force, revealed inconclusive results (Bolger, 2015). Other research supports this, holding that relationship between experience and use of force is unclear, but the mixed results may be due to the data that was used, how it was

assessed, and operationalization of the dependent variable (Klahm IV & Tillyer, 2010). Some research has found no relationship between officer experience and their decision to use of force or the level of force used (Sun & Payne, 2004; Terrill et al., 2007). However, the majority of research shows a negative correlation between an officer's experience and their use of force behaviors. These studies have indicated that more experienced officers use less force than inexperienced officers, and inexperienced officers tend to use force more frequently as well as higher levels of force than experienced officers (Garner et al., 2006; Paoline III & Terrill, 2007).

Beat assignment. The officer's beat assignment has also been found to be influential on the officer's decision to use force. Officers assigned to 3 - 11 p.m. shift and the 11p.m. - 7 a.m. shift are more likely to use force than officers assigned to the 7 a.m. – 3 p.m. shift (Brandl & Strohshine, 2012). This is not surprising given that evening shifts, 3 p.m. - 11 p.m, typically have the highest call volume of the three shifts and therefore the most interactions between the police and citizens, while the night shift, 11 p.m. - 7 a.m., typically has more calls involving intoxication, drug-related calls, and violent crime. Similarly, officers working in areas with high crime rates, or beats perceived as dangerous, tend to use force more frequently than officers working in beats with low crime rates (Lee et al., 2017).

Age. An officer's age is frequently used as a demographic variable in numerous use of force studies, but rarely as a primary correlating variable. Research has consistently revealed that younger officers tend to use force more frequently than older officers and that as officers age, they use force less frequently and when they do, they use

lower levels of force than younger officers (Brandl & Stroschine, 2012; Garner et al., 2006; Terrill & Mastrofsky, 2002).

Education. Though anecdotally thought that a higher degree of education would help officers make better judgments, and be better police, the literature has shown some variation in the research findings. According to some, officers with graduate degrees use force in the same manner as officers who only possess a high school diploma or GED (Sun & Payne, 2004). A meta-analysis completed by Bolger revealed that an officer's level of education is correlated to the frequency they employ force. Officers with a four-year degree were significantly less likely to use force than non-college-educated officers (Bolger, 2015; Rydberg & Terrill, 2010). Additional research supports this, indicating a negative relationship between college education and use of force, where officers with college degrees were less likely to get into verbal or physical altercations than officers who only had a high school degree (Paoline III & Terrill, 2007; Terrill & Mastrofsky, 2002). The literature does not indicate why college-educated officers use force less frequently than officers who were not college-educated, but one could hypothesize that a college education promotes better critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills each of which is necessary for successful de-escalation in dynamic situations where force could become necessary.

Gender. Like age, gender is a frequent demographic variable in use of force studies. Unlike the variable of age, gender has been studied more thoroughly to understand any differences in use of force patterns between male officers and female officers. The extant research seems follow two predominant sets of findings. First, most

studies indicate no difference in police use of force patterns between male officers and female officers either in the frequency of force used, or the levels of force used (Klahm IV & Tillyer, 2010; Morgan et al., 2020). The second general finding is male officers tend to use force more frequently, and at higher levels, against male suspects than female officers (Brandl & Stroshine, 2012; Paoline III & Terrill, 2007).

Race. Studies on the influence an officer's race has on their decision to use force have yielded inconsistent findings. Most studies indicate that the officer's race has no significant influence on the officer's decision to use force. Moreover, the studies that do demonstrate that the officer's race influenced use of force decisions, were no longer statistically significant once controlling for neighborhood characteristics (Bolger, 2015). Other studies have implied that minority officers may be inclined to use more force against suspects of their own race (Alpert & Dunham, 1997). Other studies suggest that African American officers are more likely to respond with force to resolve conflicts with citizens, however, the officer's race lost statistical significance once controlling for interaction characteristics and neighborhood characteristics (Sun & Payne, 2004).

Encounter variables

The final general category of use of force variables are the encounter or situational variables. This category frequently encompasses variables such as arrests, suspect resistance, whether the suspect was armed, the presence of other officers or citizens, the seriousness of the crime, and neighbor factors such as crime rates or perceived dangerousness, poverty level, and demographics. Due to the scope of this

study, only the variables of arrest, suspect resistance and presence of weapons, and seriousness of the crime will be reviewed.

Arrest. According to the most recent available data, police made an estimated 10 million arrests in 2019 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2019). Research indicates that 15 – 20 percent of all arrests require the use of force to take the suspect into custody (Eith & Durose, 2011; Smith et al., 2010). Other research has shown that the more arrests an officer makes, the more likely they are to use force (Brandl & Stroshine, 2012). Studies evaluating arrest as a predictor of police use of force have consistently demonstrated that arrest activities are highly correlated with police use of force (Bolger, 2015; Brandl & Stroshine, 2012; Hess et al., 2014; Klahm IV & Tillyer, 2010; Weisburg, 2024).

Suspect resistance and presence of weapons. It is well-established, understood, and an acceptable police practice to use force to overcome resistance and to effect arrests (Bazley et al., 2007; Terrill et al., 2007). Police officers are constrained in the amount of force they can use by statute, departmental policy, and case law. The landmark case for appropriate police use of force is *Graham v. Connor* which states that the force used must be reasonable from the perspective of a reasonable officer under similar circumstances, based on totality of circumstances, and judged through the perception of the officer on the scene and not through the lens of hindsight (*Graham v. Connor*, 1989). All states within the United States have some form of codified statute to provide the legal authority for police officers to use force in the performance of their duty (Wolfe et al., 2009). Perhaps one of the most strongly correlated and well-understood variables in use of force studies is the suspect's resistance as a predictor of police use of force. Suspect resistance

is the primary predictor of police use of force (Lee et al., 2010). In support of this, other research has shown; The influence of encounter characteristics such as resistance and the presence of weapons, are more strongly correlated to use of force than individual characteristics such as race or gender (Shane, 2017). The greater the level of resistance and hostility toward the officer, the greater the likelihood the officer will use force (Terrill & Paoline, 2013). And finally, the police are more likely to use force when met with resistance or when the suspect is armed with a weapon (Lee et al., 2010).

Seriousness of the crime. It is not surprising that the perceived seriousness of a criminal act has been shown to have a positive correlation with police use of force. However, this correlation is achieved through related activities that occur within a given situation. To illustrate this point, according to Klahm and Tillyer (2010) the seriousness of a crime is highly predictive of criminal justice decision-making. The more serious the offense, the more likely the offender will be arrested. As previously discussed, suspects who are arrested had an increased probability that force will be used against them (Lee et al., 2010). This suggestion is supported by other research which indicated that those who committed more serious crimes were more likely to have force used against them (Bolger, 2015). Bolger also found that the police are more likely to use force when the nature or seriousness of the crime increases the potential for harm to other citizens or officers.

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand how police training personnel understand the warrior and guardian mentalities and their influence on police

use of force decision making and behavior. This becomes particularly important when assessing whether these orientations influence how police interact with the public and their use of force decisions. The common assertions are that officers with a warrior mentality see the world as an “us against them” and that people are an obstacle to be overcome in the performance of law enforcement. Therefore, officers are more likely to be harsh when interacting with the public and more likely to use force. Conversely, the guardian mentality is thought to be more considerate of people, their rights, and procedural justice. Consequently, officers who have a guardian mentality are believed to be more empathic, favoring de-escalation, community-oriented, more personable when interacting with the public, and less likely to use force.

The discussion concerning whether police officers have developed a warrior or guardian mentality, and how it may impact their use of force decision-making and behavior, has been debated among both law enforcement professionals as well as in academia. Seth Stoughton has written several articles on the dangers of the warrior mindset and mentality and extolled the virtues of developing a guardian mentality among police. His philosophy has been echoed and supported by researchers Sue Rahr and Stephen K. Rice, as well as The President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing. Conversely, many police professionals hold that a warrior mindset is necessary for survival in violent confrontations and that the notion that police officers have developed one mentality, or the other, is not accurate. They argue that it is more accurate to describe the police officer’s mindset and behavior as fluid and reactive to the dynamics of the environment and situation around the officer.

Some attributes of the warrior and guardian mentalities are known and noteworthy. The concept of a warrior and guardian mentality possesses attributes of being both a cognitive metaphor as well as a cognitive heuristic. The former is a figurative comparison in which a known idea is associated with a new or vaguely defined idea in order to make sense of a lesser-known or more abstract concept. The latter is mental shortcuts developed through experiences that are used for decision making in times of danger, rapidly changing circumstances, and where life may be in danger (Seitz, 2016; Thibodeau et al., 2017). It is also worthwhile to differentiate between a mindset and a mentality. Although the terms share some similarities, they are distinctly different and are frequently inaccurately used interchangeably in discourse of the warrior and guardian orientations. A mindset is an attitude or an opinion toward a specific thing, circumstance, or situation whereas mentality is an overarching set of beliefs or attitudes that shape an individual's reactions and behaviors in general (Klein, 2016; Stoughton, 2015; Vorozhbitove & Issina, 2013). Finally, foundational to the discussion of the influence of the warrior mentality in contrast with the guardian mentality regarding predictive behavior is the concept that attitudes and beliefs are highly predictive of behavior. On the surface, this perspective may be accurate, but deeper evaluation reveals a more complex relationship. Research has shown the correlation between attitude and behavior relationship to be more nuanced. For example, the predictive strength of attitudes on behavior has been shown to be influenced by accessible information deemed relevant to the behavior, knowledge of the situation, an individual's personality, situational variables, experience, vested interest, and the complexity of the behavior

(Fabrigar et al., 2006; Glasman & Albarracin, 2006; Terry & Hogg, 2000; Zanna, 1990).

What has been lacking in this discussion is empirical research defining the orientations, the strength of the orientations, and the influences either orientation may have on officer behavior.

Recently, three studies have provided additional insight into this dialog.

Thibodeaux et al. (2016) examined how the public defined the terms “warrior” and “guardian” using various descriptive words. Moreover, they assessed the change in the valence of the descriptive words when used in relation to police compared to when the descriptive word was used in general. Their work helped define how the public defined the concepts of warrior and guardian as they relate to the police. The second study by McLean et al. (2018) found that warrior and guardian orientations within police officers were both identifiable and measurable. Furthermore, they found that officers could have elements of both orientations simultaneously. Additionally, they found that if warrior and guardian were at opposite ends of a scale, most officers were somewhere in the middle of the scale. Finally, the closer an officer was to the end of the scale the more likely specific traits of the orientation would be manifested in behavior (McLean et al., 2018). The third work, *Training for war: Academy socialization and warrior policing*, was completed by S. Simon (2021). Drawing on her ethnographic study and numerous interviews spanning a year, she concludes that police instructors create an image of “bad guys” who are both evil and dangerous. She continues that the “bad guy” construct is built upon gendered and racialized precepts and police cadets are indoctrinated to develop a warrior mentality to defeat the “bad guys” (Simon, 2021). Her study does appear to add credence that police

cadets are being influenced and socialized to adopt a warrior mentality in police academies. But what appears equally important to her, is demonstrating that police training is distinctly developed along gender inequalities and veiled racial discrimination. In reviewing her work, she concludes that certain statements or situations indicate gender or racial discrimination to the exclusion of other equally plausible, benign, alternative answers. While her work does investigate some aspects of the warrior and guardian mentalities, it does so from a gendered and racial perspective, not about how the mentalities influence use of force or to understand the police instructor's perspectives.

Although there are numerous writings about the warrior and guardian mindsets and the impact they have on officer behavior, there is little academic research about these two orientations and whether they are predictive of officer behavior or not. This is especially salient when considering police use of force. Therefore, this review of the literature was expanded into factors that are associated with use of force, officer role orientations, or influential in developing a warrior or guardian mentality. The first of the related factors include examining previous studies in police officer role orientations due to some similarities with attributes of the warrior and guardian mindsets. The second related factor was that of the police department's culture as culture influences beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. The final group of related factors examined concerns the use of force variables, as the central issue in discussions of the warrior and guardian mentalities if the extent to which these orientations influence police use of force decision making and subsequent behavior.

In his seminal work, J. Q. Wilson identified the three operational policing personalities of the Watchmen Style, the Legalistic Style, and the Service Style (Wilson, 1978). Since then, other researchers have also developed other operational roles describing how officers perform their duties based on various criteria. William Muir identified four styles of policing, Professionals, Enforcers, Reciprocators, and Avoiders based on the attitudes of passion and perspective. John Broderick identified police styles as Realists, Optimists, Enforcers, and Idealists based on their emphasis on due process of law and the need for social order. Finally, Michael Brown identified the styles of Old-Style Crime Fighter, Clean Beat Crime Fighter, and Service Style I and II based on the selectivity of enforcement and aggressiveness on the street (Bohm & Haley, 2017). Of importance are the shared similarities between various styles and the warrior and guardian mentalities. Here Wilson's Watchmen style, Muir's Enforcer style, Broderick's Enforcer, and Brown's Old-Style Crime Fighter all share attributes associated with the warrior mentality. These attributes include aggressiveness, willingness to use force, and willingness to use illegal means to accomplish legal or moral ends. Similarly, Wilson's Service style, Muir's Professional style, Broderick's Optimist, and Brown's Professional style all hold strong beliefs in people's rights, taking care of their community, and only using minimal force as a last result which are all consistent with attributes credited to the guardian mentality.

Department culture is significant because, in its' definition, culture encompasses shared values, beliefs, rituals, traditions, and common or acceptable attitudes, and norms (More et al., 2012; Paoline III & Gau, 2017). Research has shown that departments with a

culture of aggressive enforcement tend to use force more frequently, and to a greater degree of severity, than departments with less aggressive cultures. Additionally, departments with cultures of aggressive enforcement tend to have less meaningful interactions with citizens and generate more complaints from citizens than departments with less aggressive cultures (Ingram et al., 2018). These findings suggest that departments with aggressive cultures foster more aggressive officer behavior, which may support the hypothesis that aggressive officers may gravitate more to a warrior mindset or mentality.

Few other areas, in the studies of police and law enforcement, have received more attention than police use of force. There are an abundance of academic information available about police use of force variables. Typically, use of force variables are broadly categorized as situational and/or environmental variables, suspect variables, and officer variables. The variables with the greatest predictive strength regarding police use of force are the situational variables of; whether the suspect is armed, resistive activity, the seriousness of the crime, and whether an arrest was being made. Not surprising, the seriousness of the crime becomes significant due to its' correlation to arrest, suspect resistance, and the presence of weapons (Bolger, 2015; Klahm & Tillyer, 2010; Lee et al.; Terrill & Paoline III, 2013). The strongest predictive suspect variables were intoxication, age, and demeanor. Suspects who were intoxicated when encountered by law enforcement were more likely to have force used against them than suspects who were not intoxicated. However, it is likely that this correlation may be related to poor decisions made by the suspect due to intoxication rather than being intoxicated themselves. Also,

research indicates younger people are more likely to have force used against them than older people (Schmallegger, 2021). Again, this correlation may be due to other age-related variables other than age itself. For example, it is well documented that younger people commit more crimes than older people and as they age, they desist in both the number of crimes they commit as well as the seriousness of crimes committed. This is known as the aging out process (Schmallegger, 2021; Siegel & Welsh, 2017). Race was another predictive suspect variable in whether the police used force. However, it was significant primarily when race was the only variable being assessed. There is substantial variance in the research about the significance of race as a predictor of police use of force. Some research indicates that race is still significant even when other variables are controlled for (Kahn & Martin, 2016). Another significant body of research indicates that race when assessed with other covariates such as intoxication, demeanor, situational factors, or environmental factors, race becomes insignificant as a predictor of use of force (Garner et al., 2006; Klahm IV & Tillyer, 2010; Lee et al., 2010). Finally, of the officer variables, an officer's experience and beat assignment were most correlated to the use of force. Research indicates that more experienced officers tend to use force less frequently and at a lower level than inexperienced officers (Garner et al., 2006). Researchers posit that more experienced officers have better de-escalation skills with experience and are better at understanding the dynamics of the situation than their younger counterparts. In what seems to be contrary to the use of force findings about officer experience, other research indicates that younger officers typically use less force than older officers (Garner et al., 2006). Beat assignment was also a significant indicator of police use of force. Studies

indicate that officers working the second or third shift, 3:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. – 7 a.m. respectively, are more likely to use force than officers working on the first shift. Also, officers working in beats with high crime rates were more likely to use force than officers working in beats with lower crime rates (Lee et al., 2017). Studies evaluating the influence of an officer's race on their decision-making were inconsistent. Some studies found that an officer's race was not a significant predictive variable for use of force. Other studies indicated that minority officers were more likely to use force against other minority members. Other research indicated that race became insignificant when covariates were controlled. Research in the demographic variable of gender yields two main findings. First, there is little difference in the general use of force behaviors between males and females (Morgan et al., 2020). However, male officers tend to use a greater degree of force against male suspects than female officers (Paoline III & Terrill, 2007). Finally, studies into the effects of an officer's education on their use of force decision-making produced inconsistent results. Although some studies indicate the level of an officer's education did not influence their use of force behavior, most of the research indicated that officers with a college education used less force than officers with only a high school education. Researchers hypothesize that officers with a college education are likely to have better critical thinking, analytical, and communication skills than officers who did not go to college.

What the research has shown in this literary review is that there are several characteristics that various police operational styles share with the warrior mindset and guardian mentalities. Research also indicated that culture and environment play a role in

an officer's attitudes, beliefs, and behavior. It also demonstrates that there is a plethora of variables, many of which are complexly correlated, that contribute to police use of force. The research has also helped to begin to define how the public perceives the qualities of the warrior and guardian mentalities. Research has preliminarily demonstrated that the warrior and guardian orientations are real orientations in officers and that they are measurable.

What the research does not show is; 1. How the warrior and guardian mentalities are defined or understood by police personnel, 2. How or why the orientations are developed, 3. The correlation between officer's belief systems and their use of force, and 4. To what degree either of these orientations influences police behavior or police use of force. This study addressed these gaps by exploring how police training personnel conceptualize the warrior and guardian mentalities and perceive their influence on officer behavior and use of force. By capturing police trainer's lived experiences, it extends knowledge in the discipline and lays groundwork for future research on the broader impact of these mentalities on police-community relationships.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology selected to further understand the topic of this study. This study was conducted to advance a more informed understanding of the warrior and guardian mentalities, and their potential impact on police use of force, through the perspectives and lived experiences of police trainers. Accordingly, a qualitative study was chosen utilizing a phenomenological approach. Chapter 3 will further describe study design, the role of the researcher, qualifiers for potential participants, plans for data collection and analysis. The chapter concludes with a

discussion addressing issues of validity and trustworthiness in the study as well as ethical considerations.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

In this qualitative study, I sought to understand how police trainers in Oklahoma understand the influence that the warrior or guardian mentalities may have on police use of force decision making. I also sought to better understand the phenomenon that the warrior or guardian mentality may have on police officer's behavior in the performance of their duties. Patton (2015) and Al-Busaidi (2008) noted that a qualitative research approach is appropriate when the nature of the inquiry seeks insight to people's experiences, makes inquiries into the meanings people develop based on their experiences, or studying people in their individual or social environments. Developing a deeper understanding of a phenomenon through the lived experiences of those involved within a situation, or phenomena, is best accomplished through a phenomenological approach (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Restatement of Research Question

RQ1: What influence do Oklahoma police training professionals feel that the warrior and guardian mentalities have on police use of force behavior?

In this qualitative study, I explored how Oklahoma police training personnel understand the concept of a warrior mentality and their perceptions of the warrior mentality's influence on police behavior. This work offers insight into the extent that police officers behave in a manner consistent with their alignment with a warrior or guardian mentality. Furthermore, it may help demonstrate how an officer's orientation with a particular mentality predicts behavior in comparison to how behavior is predicated

by other factors in daily police work. Additionally, it may provide insight into the veracity of the purported warrior and guardian mentality in police officers and insight into the function of these roles in police work.

Research Design and Rationale

I used a qualitative method endeavoring to understand the influence, or lack thereof, of the warrior or guardian mentality on police use of force behavior through the perspectives of police training personnel. Specifically, I sought to gain insight into this phenomenon by examining the lived experiences and perceptions of police trainers who have had experience with aspects of the warrior mindset, the guardian mindset, warrior mentality, the guardian mentality, police training, use of force decision making, and the impact these factors have on relationships between the police and the communities they serve. The qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study as it works to understand meanings, characterizations, and interpretations through the perceptions and lived experiences of others (see Zikmund, 2003). Additionally, I attempted to better understand the participants subjective perceptions and meanings within a specific social context (see Fossey et al., 2002).

I used an interpretive phenomenological design. The purpose of this study aligns with a phenomenological design due to its' focus on understanding a phenomenon through the lived experiences of the participants involved to obtain rich, comprehensive data. The data can be used to accurately analyze the essence of the participant's perceptions and lived experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). The philosophical approach to phenomenological research is rooted in the concept

that meaning is a social construct developed by individuals through their experiences and interactions with the world around them (Merriam, 2002).

Role of the Researcher

Within interpretive phenomenological research, the researcher is the primary instrument for both gathering the data and objectively analyzing it to achieve a rich, deep, and accurate understanding of the phenomenon as presented by the participant (Merriam, 2002, Patton, 2015). As the primary data gathering instrument, I was deeply involved with the participants they expressed their subjective experiences within the social context wherein the experiences transpired. As the data is gathered, I endeavored to understand, describe, and analyze the meanings as related by the participants. In this role and process, it is important to recognize that I was a part of the meaning making and ultimately shapes the research process and findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Therefore, to maintain academic rigor and integrity it is imperative I understood my positionality within the research; how my subjectivity and potential for bias may affect the gathering, analysis, and reporting of the data; and the importance of engaging in criticality and reflexivity throughout the research process (see Babbie, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To accomplish this, there were several characteristics that need to be present in an effective researcher. A good qualitative researcher should have considerable knowledge about the object of the study, an interest in understanding the object of study, a concern for the integrity of data collection and preservation, asking quality questions that help answer the research question, and to be a good listener. These skills help facilitate the researcher's sense-making in the analysis of the data (Fink, 2000; Yin, 2016). The researcher needs to

be able to create a space for meaningful conversations with participants in which they are comfortable and willing to reveal rich information about themselves and their experiences (Pezalla et al., 2012). In addition, a researcher should understand the nature of the data being sought, be both skilled and prepared to conduct the interview, and to do so in a manner that effectively draws the data out from the participants (Chenail, 2011). While conducting interviews it is important that the researcher practice active listening to the accounts of the participants, recording their accounts with precision, while minimizing personal subjectivity and bias to develop and report a quality research study (Fusch et al., 2019). Finally, it is important that the researcher be culturally competent, understanding the sociocultural norms, political dynamics, values, and patterns of behavior that exist in a particular study setting (Pelzang & Hutchinson, 2018). I believe I met these requirements.

It is crucial for a researcher to also be aware of potential biases and subjectivity that they may bring into the research and to be cognizant of the impact of their positionality and social location (Fusch et al., 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Additionally, the qualitative researcher needs to acknowledge and understand the potential for subjectivity or bias that could be introduced at several points within the research process. To guard against this, I engaged in a reflective, iterative process throughout the research process to both guard against, or minimize, bias to maintain research integrity and objectivity (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Rolls & Relf, 2006; Tufford & Newman, 2010). Throughout this study I acknowledged my background as a law enforcement professional and criminal justice professor and maintained reflexive awareness to minimize bias.

Additionally, the data analysis followed an iterative cycle consistent with a modified interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) repeatedly moving between transcripts, codes, and themes to ensure interpretations were grounded in the participants' lived experiences rather than my assumptions or bias. I revisited my coding frameworks across questions to verify consistency, analytic saturation, while maintaining the core IPA principle of idiography. I also cross-referenced macro-themes and listed direct participant quotes to further reinforce confirmability. These steps helped ensure transparency, minimize interpretive bias, preserve the authenticity of the participants' perspectives, and promoted academic rigor, credibility, and ethical integrity of this work.

Finally, another facet in the role of the researcher is to maintain care and protection for the participants. Participants need to be protected from unintentional or unexpected harm. Their identity needs to be protected and their responses to questions accurately recorded and presented. Participants also need to be informed about the basic nature of the study, risks involved and provided with informed consent. It is the responsibility of the researcher to see that each of these needs are met within the design of the research project and to provide a safe and engaging environment to interact with the participants (CITI Program, n.d).

Ultimately, the primary role of the researcher to develop the study in a manner that promotes gathering rich, raw data from the participants, that protects the participants, analyzes the data, and presents the findings, all in a manner that upholds the integrity and rigor of the study. I accomplished this through careful alignment of my research methodology, the theoretical framework, and analytical process used to interpret the data.

Moreover, I followed Walden University's research guidelines and carefully followed the directions given by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the rights and welfare of all the participants were protected throughout this study.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

Unlike a quantitative study that uses random sampling techniques to facilitate generalization, qualitative researchers frequently use purposeful sampling to enlist the assistance of participants with specific knowledge and/or experiences that will be able to provide rich and detailed information about the topic of study (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). According to Patton (2015), there are several strategies, used individually or in combination, that can be employed to select participants who are best able to assist the researcher answer the research questions. Two strategies were used to facilitate participant selection. The first was group characteristics sampling in which I selected participants based on their membership to a specific group that can help illuminate group characteristics (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Using this strategy, the participants needed for this study were law enforcement training personnel who also had prior law enforcement experience. This helped to ensure that the participants had some experience with, or conceptualization of, the warrior and guardian mentalities and their possible influence on police use of force behaviors. This strategy is also appropriate since the phenomenon being studied is unique to police work. Closely related to the first strategy is the second strategy, key informant and key knowledgeable sampling. This method of participant selection works to identify participants with substantial knowledge about the subject of

inquiry (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The participants used in this study were those police officers who have developed their professional acumen to the level of a trainer or instructor. This characteristic of the participants was important to this study as trainers and instructors are assumed to understand that training and socialization have some degree influence on beliefs, attitudes, critical thought processes, and ultimately on behavior (Abudlhabib, 2020; Garner, 2005).

Instrumentation

A research instrument is often considered as a tool used to collect and analyze data. In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument that gathers the data, analyzes it, and provides the findings (Pezalla et al., 2012). It is widely accepted that the qualitative researcher is involved in the interview process and that it is within this interaction between the researcher and the participants that provides a place in which the respondents feel safe to share their lived experiences (Owens, 2006). However, when the researcher is the instrument, instrumentation rigor and bias management become important issues to be addressed when using interviews as the source from which the data is collected (Chenail, 2011).

The interview questions were initially developed using gaps in the literature regarding the research question as a starting point. The interview questions were then developed further employing my experience and expertise in the law enforcement profession to further refine the questions to best illicit answers from participants, who were also law enforcement professionals, that would help answer the research question. Moreover, the interview questions were further refined to use a layered structure that

would explore both the foundational experiences of the participants but also capture their nuanced professional insights in a method consistent with phenomenological qualitative study.

Procedures for Pilot Study

To further enhance the reliability of the interview questions, a pilot study was conducted. Pilot studies are commonly used in qualitative study to assess the study's feasibility, as a pre-test for a research instrument, and to evaluate whether the instrument generates data that will answer the research question (Chenail, 2011; Malqvist et al., 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). The pilot study used both an expert panel as well as a participant group that was similar in composition to the participant group used in the actual study. In accordance with Walden policy, all participants in the pilot study were my friends, no data collected in the pilot study interviews was used in the actual study, nor did any participant of the pilot study participate in the actual study (see Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001; Walden, 2022). Furthermore, no participant in this pilot study had any positional power over the other. While an informed consent form is not mandated for a pilot study, a modified consent was provided for each individual assisting within the pilot study as an additional safeguard for the participants. The modified consent included information about the nature and purpose of the pilot study, that participation in the pilot study was voluntary and could be terminated at any time, that they did not have to answer any question they did not feel comfortable answering, that the information provided in the interviews would be kept confidential, that at the end of the pilot study analysis all recordings would be

destroyed, and that all answers provided by the participants were expected to be subjective and based on their experiences and perceptions. Therefore, there were no right or wrong answers to the questions asked.

The first phase of this pilot study was to use an expert panel. The expert panel was comprised of three police administrators each of whom has over 20 years of experience in law enforcement, more than 5 years of experience as a police administrator, and a minimum of an undergraduate degree in criminal justice. Two of the three police administrators had advanced degrees. The panel was provided a copy of the research question and the interview questions. The expert panel reviewed the questions and were given the opportunity to ask questions about the research question, the study, and the interview questions. The primary purposes of the expert panel were to assess if the interview questions appeared to answer the research questions, to review the questions for potential indications of bias in the nature and wording of the questions, that the questions provided opportunity for a range of answers for participants, and to offer suggestions for any additional questions that may contribute to answering the research question. The results of the expert panel were that the interview questions appeared to answer the research question, that the questions did not appear to be either bias or leading, and that the questions were open ended and allowed for a range of answers.

The second phase of this pilot study was to conduct interviews with volunteers who were of a similar professional background to the participants sought for the actual study. Five volunteers were interviewed for this phase of the pilot study. The pilot study was administered and evaluated following the procedures outlined by Van Teijlingen and

Hundley (2001) and Peat et al. (2002). The objectives for this phase of the pilot study included evaluating the adequacy and clarity of the interview questions, determining if the research protocols were realistic, assessing whether the data collected answered the research question, provide further evaluation of the data collection process, and gaining experience for the actual study. At the conclusion of each interview there was a debrief discussion time with each participant affording the participant to ask questions, to make suggestions, and provide feedback about the overall interview experience. They were also provided with a copy of the research question to provide their opinion on whether the questions and answers in the interview answered the research question. The data collected in these interviews was later reviewed to verify that it contributed to answering the research question. Additionally, the interview questions, and the subsequent participant answers, were reviewed and evaluated to revise the interview questions to provide better descriptive answers. Finally, the feedback from the participants was reviewed. The pilot study volunteers reported that the interview process was enjoyable and relaxed, that they were comfortable with the questions, they felt that the research question was answered by the interview questions. A few participants made suggestions regarding additional questions or modification to the existing interview questions. All participant feedback was evaluated in the context of the goal of this research and changes made, as appropriate, as part of the iterative process (see Ravnich & Carl, 2015). None of the answers provided by participants in the pilot study were analyzed for use in the final study.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection (as Appropriate)

Potential volunteers were sought at police academies within the state, soliciting participation from qualified instructors at various police academies. Since participants were sought at various police academy locations, appropriate permission from each site had to be obtained prior to meeting with any potential volunteers at the site. Once permissions were obtained from the appropriate academy authority, brief individual meetings were conducted with the instructors during which time I introduced myself, provided basic information about the research, allowed time to answer questions the instructors may have about the research or interview process, and then let the instructors know that I was seeking volunteers to participate in the interviews. My contact information was left with the instructors so that they could contact me later if they choose to participate. Interviews were scheduled and conducted at the police academy at a time and place mutually agreeable with the volunteer. All interview rooms were verified as secure to protect the participants privacy and research confidentiality. Prior to an interview, each participant had another opportunity to ask any questions they may have had about the process. The informed consent form was explained to each volunteer with time allowed for them to ask questions about it. The informed consent form was signed by each volunteer prior to any interview.

This initial method to recruit volunteers was chosen because police are known to be suspicious of people they do not know, or who are not a part of the law enforcement community. This gave me the opportunity to both be introduced to the instructors in a

place where they are comfortable and in charge, and to better establish a relationship with them as one who has also served in law enforcement.

The participants for this study were drawn from police instructors at state basic police academies. These basic academies may be at the Oklahoma C.L.E.E.T. facility or a satellite academy. C.L.E.E.T. is the State of Oklahoma's law enforcement officer accrediting body, and police training across the state is required to conform to, or meet, C.L.E.E.T. standards (Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training, 2025; Oklahoma Statutes Sec. 70-3311.16, 2024). All perspective participants are legal adults and were screened to ensure that they have meet the study requirements. There were three criteria for this study: the participants have previously served in law enforcement for a minimum of 3 years, are certified as C.L.E.E.T. Instructors, and finally, they instruct at a basic police academy. These criteria were verified through official records. The basic requirements for this study are the same requirements for a police officer to become a C.L.E.E.T. Certified Instructor and teach at a C.L.E.E.T. approved academy (Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training, 2025; Oklahoma Statutes Sec. 70-3311.16, 2024).

All participants were provided with basic information regarding the nature of the study and its potential uses with care given to not disclosing information that may bias the participant's responses. The participants were also be provided with an informed consent form. The elements on the form were explained to each participant and time was provided for them to ask any questions they may have. All participants were assured that their identity will be protected, their information secured such that only the researcher

will have access to it, and that anonymity will be maintained within the limits of the law. The volunteers were told that if they choose to participate in this research, and they are not comfortable answering a specific question, they did not have to answer it. Additionally, they may stop answering any questions if for some reason they choose to not continue with the interview. Some of the primary concerns for the qualitative researcher are protecting the participant's privacy, ensuring participants are fully informed about the process and their part in the research, to help them feel comfortable with the researcher, and to obtain the most rich, accurate, and pure data from each as possible.

Each interview was recorded with two digital recording devices. The second device will serve as back up recording in the event the first device malfunctions. All participants identity were anonymized through a coding process known only to this researcher. All recordings and transcripts are secured in a locked location that only the researcher has access to. At the appropriate time, the original data from the interviews will be destroyed to further protect the privacy of the participants.

At the conclusion of each interview, the participants were thanked for their assistance, sharing their time for the interview, and were given an opportunity to ask questions about the interview and research topic. Research conducted in friendly and warm terms helps participant to feel appreciated, builds relationships, as well as creating goodwill for potential follow up interviews (Ravitch & Carl, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Finally, each participant was asked for their permission to recontact them in the

future if necessary and obtain their contact information if they are agreeable to being recontacted.

Data Analysis Plan

One purpose for using a phenomenological methodology is to understand the phenomenon from the perspective and lived experiences of the participants. Therefore, it is crucial to analyze the data in a manner that provides an accurate description of the phenomenon and to reveal its' true meaning as expressed by the participants (Alase, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The first step in the data analysis was to create a verbatim transcription of each of the recorded interviews. Each interview was transcribed onto a Microsoft Word document. Each interview verbatim transcription was coded in a way that the participant's identification will only be known to this researcher through a process of generalized anonymization. The transcripts were reviewed against the original recordings to verify their accuracy. Once the transcription was complete, the original recordings were secured in a locked location accessible only to this researcher.

The analytic process employed in this study followed a systematic, iterative approach consistent with a modified interpretive phenomenological analysis framework. The initial full transcript for each participant's interview was re-read several times to discover significant points, meanings, and ideas as expressed by the participants. The interview responses were then grouped by questions for organizational clarity and analysis. As the data was reviewed, it was assessed for common phrases, ideas, and meaningful statements which became the foundation for the initial inductive, descriptive

coding process. After the initial descriptive coding, a second round of interpretive coding was used to further analyze the data. The codes were analyzed for similarities and contrasts and then grouped to develop emergent themes within each question. The emergent themes for each question were then compared with the participants interviews to ensure they were consistent with the participant's responses and did not distort the original meanings or perspectives (Alase, 2017). The final stage of the data analysis involved synthesizing the emergent themes across the questions into conceptually related overarching themes. The overarching themes provide textural and structural descriptions that offer insight on how police training professionals construct and interpret the warrior and guardian mentalities and how they influence officer use of force (Anderson & Eppard, 1998; Alase, 2017, Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The findings of this analysis will be discussed in detail in chapter four.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Both quantitative research and qualitative research both seek to answer who, when, how, where, and why, to support, dispute, or better understand a theory (Yeung, 2015). Unlike quantitative research, which seeks objectivity to statistically analyze numerical data and attempt to generalize the findings to the greater population, qualitative work seeks to subjectively analyze data that cannot be accurately depicted as a number and its phenomenological interpretation may or may not be generalizable to a larger population (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yeung, 2015). Due to the both the subjective and interpretive nature of qualitative research, qualitative research has been criticized for its perceived lack of scientific rigor, poor justifications of the methods adopted, and the

potential for researcher bias (Noble & Smith, 2015; Yeung, 2015). Therefore, achieving validity in qualitative inquiry, which is often interchanged with the term trustworthiness in qualitative research, should be both a principal value as well as a final goal for the qualitative researcher (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, or research rigor, is the degree of confidence that can be held in the data, its' interpretation, the soundness of its' methodological processes, and an analysis that is true to the spirit and meaning provided by the participants (Connelly, 2016). Trustworthiness is frequently assessed according to credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity (Bowen, 2005; Connelly, 2016).

Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence one can have in the truth and findings of a particular qualitative study (Bowen, 2005; Connelly, 2016). Establishing credibility through the research design is arguably an essential component of methodological rigor and can be enhanced through several strategies (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). These strategies include triangulation, member checking, negative case analysis, reflexivity, peer debriefing, reflective journaling, and prolonged engagement with participants, thick contextual descriptions, and transparency (Amin et al., 2020; Bowen, 2005; Connelly 2016). Employing a combination of two or more of these techniques, described collectively as methodological triangulation, helps to strengthen credibility (Bowen, 2005).

To enhance the credibility of this study, intentional strategies were implemented. First, the research design and sampling strategies were structured to provide a safe and authentic environment for the participants whose lived professional experiences positioned them to meaningfully address the research question. In addition, this my background and experience in the law enforcement profession facilitated trust and rapport with the participants who may otherwise be guarded with individuals outside of the profession. Finally, care was taken to provide an interview setting that is relational, non-evaluative, had contextual understanding, and person centered to encourage openness, authenticity, and accurate descriptions and perception of the participants lived experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Data saturation was also used as another triangulation technique. Data saturation is a key component of a quality study. While there is no exact measure that defines when saturation has been obtained, Fusch & Ness (2015) suggest saturation occurs when no new data is being obtained from additional interviews, no new codes or themes are identified, and sufficient data exists to support replication. In this study, the concept of data saturation was applied to check the analyzed data from one participant against the analyzed data of the other participants. In doing so, this will help to show that the data and subsequent analysis, is consistent across the participants thereby demonstrating consistency of the data and increasing credibility. Cross participant comparison also allowed me to identify and examine any data or themes that diverged from the majority, thereby performing a negative case analysis to further strengthen the study's credibility.

One of the frequent criticisms of qualitative research is influence of researcher bias due to the nature of the study and the researcher's close interactions with the participants. To further ensure credibility, I actively engaged in reflexive thinking to minimize potential researcher bias. This entails constant attention to being aware of the role as a researcher and its' impact on all aspects of the research from design, methodology, sampling strategies, data collection, evaluation, to the reporting of the findings. Although research bias is not eliminated, it is accounted for through the researcher's reflexivity (Amin et al., 2020). This also required continuous reassessment of positionality and subjectivity within the research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the findings of one study can be either generalize to a population or its applicability to another study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Connelly, 2016). Since the goal of a qualitative work is not generalization, but rather providing a rich description and contextualized understanding of a phenomenon as experienced by the participants. Because of its focus on meaning within specific contexts, transferability in its entirety is not the aim of this study (Ravitch & Car, 2016). However, if one can provide thick descriptions and sufficient contextual detail, transferability can be improved. This enables future researchers to assess the study and discern how aspects of the study may be applicable to their work within given contexts.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of data and the findings over time (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Bowen, 2005). Moreover, dependability entails employing a logical argument

why the researcher choose a specific methodology to use in the study, that the data is appropriate for answering the research question, and being able to rationalize the choices that were made throughout the study (Ravitch & Carl,2016). The use of triangulation was used to help promote dependability as was a review of the post-interview questions asked to both participants in the pilot research which were later asked to the volunteers in the study. This research employed triangulation strategies and has thoroughly described the rational for the decisions regarding the chosen research design, methodology, sampling design, the type of data collected, and how it was analyzed to produce an accurate description of the participant's experiences with the phenomenon being researched in this study.

Confirmability

Confirmability is similar to the concept of objectivity in quantitative studies. However, qualitative studies do not claim to be objective but rather acknowledge their subjectivity within the interpretive experiences of the participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Connelly, 2016). Still, qualitative studies should seek confirmability in that the study should be relatively free from unacknowledged researcher bias (Ravitch & Carl 2016). In this study, both triangulation and researcher reflexivity were used to support greater confirmability. Particular attention was paid to researcher reflexivity as mitigating strategy against researcher bias, positionality, and the researcher as the instrument for data collection. All have significant potential to introduce researcher bias into the study if not rigorously mitigated.

Authenticity

Authenticity is the degree to which the researcher, and associative study, accurately depict the subjective realities of the participant in relation to the object of the study (Connelly, 2016). This entails the use of the thick, rich, detailed descriptions of the accounts provided by the participants which is the hallmark of qualitative studies. Additionally, the concept of fairness is a critical aspect of authenticity. The researcher avoided situations where the participants values or perceptions are suppressed, even when at odds with the researcher's values or biases (Amin et al., 2020). In doing so, the researcher is better able authentically report, clarify, and describe constructs of the participant's experiences and perceived realities as provided by the participants.

Ethical Procedures

All forms of social research involving people inherently raise ethical concerns (Babbie, 2017). In qualitative research, the researcher as the instrument of data collection, has prolonged and intimate discourses with the participants and should strive to build trusting relationships that will promote collaboration. Therefore, the welfare of the participants is a priority for the researcher (Babbie, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In addition, when working with people there is always a risk of unintentional harms for which the researcher should take care to avoid or have contingency mitigation plans in place before the research begins (Yin, 2016; Amin et al., 2020).

In this research, several steps were taken to ensure the welfare of the participants. First, none of the participants in this research are members of an at-risk or protected class of people. Next, the pertinent essentials of this research project were explained to all

prospective participants to the degree that provides them with the most information about the research without providing too much information where it may alter their responses. All prospective participants had the opportunity withdraw from the study at any time and were assured that to do so has no negative connotation associated with it. All prospective participants were provided with an informed consent form, which was thoroughly explained to them as well as noting that their participation is voluntary and that they may stop participating the research at any time if they feel they need to do so. All participants were also informed that their responses and identities will be protected both during the research process and afterward. For the individuals who took part in this research, every reasonable effort was made to make each participant to feel comfortable and respected throughout the research process. Moreover, I worked with the participants to establish rules of inquiry in advance as well as to assure the participants that they may, and can disagree with the me, and that it is completely acceptable to do so. Finally, appropriate care and safeguards were exercised to ensure this study adhered to IRB standards and regulations both for the protection of the study participants, but also for the safety of Walden University, the integrity of the study, and me.

Summary

This chapter has described the use of a phenomenological qualitative study as the appropriate methodology to best understand the perceptions of Oklahoma police training personnel regarding the influence of the warrior or guardian mindset in police officers use of force decision-making. To gather rich, thick data about this phenomenon, the participant selection process employed both a Group Characteristics Sampling and a Key

Informant and Key Knowledgeable sampling strategies (Patton, 2015). The key requirements for participant selection were also discussed including why the decision was made to use C.L.E.E.T. Police Instructors as the pool from which to draw the participants.

The next section described the role of the researcher who is the data collection instrument in this study. In qualitative study, there is the concern that the researcher will introduce bias into the results of their research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Therefore, it is imperative for the researcher to engage in reflexive thinking and transparency throughout the various phases of the research. This does not eliminate bias, but it does add to the credibility of the work by acknowledging potential bias (Amin et al., 2020). The data for this study was collected from semistructured responsive interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This facilitated respondent answers that both answer the research question yet also provided the researcher the opportunity to further probe individual responses to develop a deeper understanding of the participant's experiences. All participant's identities and information provided by them, were coded and secured to protect their privacy. All the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and checked for accuracy. The data collected was analyzed through immersive review and multiple iterations of coding to uncover emergent categories and themes that provided answers to the research question.

The next section discussed the study's validity and trustworthiness in detail through careful examination of its' credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity (Connelly, 2016; Bowen, 2005). Moreover, the strategies that were used through the various stages of the research, which have been accepted

improve a qualitative study's validity and trustworthiness, have been described (Bowen, 2005; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Connelly, 2016; Amin et al., 2020). These strategies include data saturation, triangulation, researcher reflexivity, fairness in data collection, analysis, and reporting the findings. Documenting evidence of trustworthiness and authenticity provides the reader with greater confidence in the rigor of the study and its' reported results (Amin et al., 2020).

The final section of this chapter examined the importance and necessity of ethical considerations when using people as participants in qualitative research. Furthermore, this researcher detailed the procedures used to ensure this study was conducted with care and ethical consideration. Some of these protective procedures include protecting the identity and well-being of the participants, the use of informed consent, approaching the interviews from a relational standpoint, and following IRB standards and policies.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

In this qualitative study, I aimed to develop a deeper understanding of how police trainers contextualize the warrior or guardian mentalities and their perceptions and experiences about the influence these mentalities may have on police use of force behavior and decision making. Moreover, I provide additional insight about the alleged warrior and guardian mentality in police officers and how these mentalities may function or serve a purpose in police work (McLean et al., 2018). The findings from this study add to the body of research by deepening our understanding of the warrior and guardian mentalities from the perspective of law enforcement officers and add to the existing body of knowledge regarding the nature of the contributing factors to police use of force.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand police trainer's perceptions of the warrior and guardian mindset of law enforcement. Specifically, I sought to understand how the warrior and guardian mentalities are understood by law enforcement training personnel, foster greater comprehension of how police instructors conceptualize the warrior and guardian mindsets, and develop a better understanding of the potential influence these mentalities or mindsets may have on law enforcement behavior.

I explored how police training personnel perceive and interpret the warrior and guardian cognitive metaphors through descriptive attributes and functional significance within law enforcement. The central research question for this research was "What

influence do Oklahoma police training professionals believe that the warrior and guardian mentalities have on police use of force behavior?”

Chapter Organization

This chapter starts with a synopsis of the pilot study conducted for this research followed by a brief discussion of demographic characteristics relevant to this study. I then discuss elements germane to the data collection process, followed by a summary of the processes used to analyze the data, and an analysis of the evidence of the trustworthiness in this research. Finally, the results of the data analysis for this research are reviewed along with discussions on data supporting findings as well as nonconforming data.

Pilot Study

To further enhance and assess the reliability of the interview questions, a pilot study was conducted. Pilot studies are commonly used in qualitative study to assess the study’s feasibility, as a pre-test for a research instrument, and to evaluate whether the research instrument used generates data that will answer the research question (Chenail, 2011; Malqvist et al., 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001).

Purpose

The purpose of this pilot study was to assess the questions developed for the interview for this research, to provide a practice format for the actual interviews that would be conducted at a later time, to evaluate whether or not the questions developed elicited answers that would help answer the research question, and as a platform to seek professional feedback from police instructors and police executives about the study, the research question, the research methodology, and the interview questions.

Pilot Study Methodology

For the pilot study, I used both an expert panel of police administrators as well as a participant group of police instructors that were similar in composition to the participant group sought for the actual study. In accordance with Walden policy, all participants in the pilot study were my friends, no data collected in the pilot study was used in the actual study, nor did any participants of the pilot study participate in the actual study (see Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001; Walden, 2022). Furthermore, neither party of this pilot study has any positional power over the other. While an informed consent form was not mandated for a pilot study, a modified consent was provided for each individual assisting within the pilot study as a safeguard. The modified consent included information about the nature and purpose of the pilot study, that participation in the pilot study was voluntary and could be terminated at any time, that they did not have to answer any question they did not feel comfortable answering, that the information provided in the interviews would be kept confidential, that at the end of the pilot study analysis all recordings would be destroyed, and that all answers provided by the participants were expected to be subjective and based on their experiences and perceptions. Therefore, there were no right or wrong answers to the questions asked.

The first phase of this pilot study was to use an expert panel. The expert panel was comprised of three police administrators, each of whom has over 20 years of experience in law enforcement, more than 5 years' experience as a police administrator, and a minimum of an undergraduate degree in criminal justice. Two of the three police administrators have advanced degrees.

The panel was provided a copy of the research question and the interview questions, as well as opportunity to ask me any questions, as they reviewed the questions. The primary purposes of the expert panel were to assess if the interview questions had a logical progression, to determine if the questions develop an answer to the research questions, to review the questions for potential indications of bias in the nature and wording of the questions, to see that the questions provided opportunity for a range of answers for participants, and to offer suggestions for any additional questions that may contribute to answering the research question. The results of the expert panel were that the interview questions provided a logical approach to the research question, appeared to answer the research question, the questions did not appear to be either bias or leading, and that the questions were open ended and allowed for a range of answers.

The second phase of this pilot study was to conduct interviews with volunteers who were of a similar professional background to the participants sought for the actual study. Five volunteers were interviewed for this phase of the pilot study. The objectives for this phase of the pilot study include evaluating the adequacy of the interview questions, determining if the research protocols were realistic, assessing whether the data collected answered the research question, further evaluation of the data analysis process, and gain experience for the actual study. At the conclusion of each interview there was a debrief discussion time with each participant which allowed the participant to ask questions, to make suggestions, and provide feedback about the overall interview experience. They were also provided with a copy of the research question to provide their opinion on whether the questions and answers in the interview answered it.

Pilot Study Results

The data I collected in these interviews was later reviewed to verify that it contributed to answering the research question. Additionally, the interview questions, and the subsequent participant answers, were reviewed and evaluated to revise the interview questions to provide better descriptive answers. Finally, the feedback from the participants was reviewed. The pilot study volunteers reported that the interview was enjoyable and relaxed, that they were comfortable with the questions, they felt that the research question was answered by the interview questions and made a few suggestions regarding additional questions or modification to the existing interview questions. All participant feedback was evaluated in the context of the goal of this research and changes made, as appropriate, as part of the iterative process (see Ravnich & Carl, 2015). None of the answers provided by participants in the pilot were analyzed for use as data in this research.

Demographics

At the beginning of each interview, participants were asked to complete a brief confidential demographic questionnaire. Participants were told that this questionnaire was completely voluntary, and that their choice to answer all, some, or none of the questions had no bearing on their ability to participate in the study nor did it impact the credibility of their answers. Furthermore, I also explained that the purpose of the demographic questions was to further assist me in the analysis of the data collected from the interviews to assess the possibilities that commonalities or differences within categories, or themes may have developed along demographic factors.

The demographic variables requested were those that may have an influence or predisposition to certain aspects of this study. Some of the demographic questions included, but were not limited to, race, gender, agency size, community population, work environment, years of service, and highest level of education. Each demographic variable asked was supported by research demonstrating its' potential influence on police use of force decision making. For example, research has indicated that police use of force levels tend to increase when there are differences between the officer's and the civilian's race, ethnicity, or gender (Wright II & Headley, 2020). Researchers Paoline III and Terrill (2007) found that officers with more years of street experience tend to use less verbal and physical force than officers with less experience and that officers with a college degree tend to use less force than those without. Finally, an officer's age, shift assignment, and size of the city served have been found to correlate with police use of force (Brandl & Strohshine, 2012). While demographic variables are not a focus of this study, evaluating them in the context of the data elicited potentially adds another dimension of understanding in this area of study. See Table 1 for the demographic variables and the participants responses for each.

Table 1*Participant Demographics (N = 15)*

Demographic variable	Number
Agency size	
1 – 25	4
26 – 100	4
101 – 250	0
More than 250	7
Jurisdiction size	
Less than 10,000	0
10,000 – 100,000	7
100,001 – 250,000	0
More than 250,000	8
Working environment	
Large City	6
Small town	3
Rural	4
Other	2
Years of Service	
3 – 5 years	0
6- 10 years	1
11 – 15 years	3
16 – 20 years	2
21- 30 years	6
More than 30 years	2
Gender	
Male	13
Female	2
Other	0
Prefer not to answer	0
Race	
White	11
African American	2
Hispanic	0
Asian	0
Native American	1
Other	1
Prefer not to answer	0
Instructional emphasis *	
Firearms	10
Defensive Tactics	7
Patrol	5
De-escalation	3
Other	4
Highest level of education attained	
High school / GED	2
Some college or Associates degree	7
Bachelors degree	6
Masters degree	0
Terminal degree	0

*More than 15 answers to *Instructional emphasis* as instructors were allowed to mark all areas of instruction in which they are CLEET certified. Several instructors had multiple certifications.

Data Collection

Data for this research was collected through semistructured interviews with volunteers who met the inclusion criteria as outlined in the recruitment email and flyer. I spent many days, over a 2-month period, traveling to various locations to meet with volunteers to interview them for this research. Volunteers were solicited at the Oklahoma State Basic Police Academy administered by C.L.E.E.T. as well as three C.L.E.E.T. accredited satellite academies at other locations within the state of Oklahoma. I met with the administration at each location to answer any questions they may have had about the research, how the data may be used, maintaining privacy, or any other questions. Also, during these meetings, I relayed recruiting requirements to ensure recruitment was not compelled, or required, to maintain the respect for person. The academy administration distributed recruiting emails and flyers and noted only that I had their permission to be at the academies, to conduct research, to interview volunteers, and to use private rooms or offices at the academies for the purposes of conducting interviews as needed. Moreover, I also stated that neither C.L.E.E.T., nor the respective academy administrations, endorsed, encouraged, or asked individuals to participate in this research. Finally, C.L.E.E.T. and all academy administrators asked that it be made clear to volunteers, and within the body of this research, that the participant's answers would be considered the volunteer's opinion, beliefs, values, and based on their experiences, and would not be considered reflective of, or speaking on behalf of, or on the authority of C.L.E.E.T., or any representative law enforcement agency, or its policies. In accordance with their request, all answers given by study participants reflect only the experiences, opinions, and beliefs

of the participant. The participants, and their answers, are not endorsed or condoned by C.L.E.E.T. or other law enforcement agencies that the instructors are affiliated with. Nor are the participant's answers necessarily reflective of C.L.E.E.T. or other law enforcement agency's training, policy, or law.

As participants contacted this researcher to participate in this study, interview times and locations were set in a manner most convenient for the volunteer. Prior to each interview, participants were provided with a copy of the IRB approved Informed Consent, briefed on the interview process, given a copy of the demographics questionnaire to complete if they wished, and given a time to ask any questions they may have. All interviews were conducted in person and recorded on two devices. Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary and anonymous. Furthermore, their names and responses would be coded in a manner that keeps their identities hidden. These recordings and participant identities were later stored in a secure, locked location which can only be accessed by this researcher. All interviews were conducted in offices or meeting rooms where privacy and anonymity could be maintained. The locations for the interviews were chosen by the participants. There were 14 volunteers that participated in this study. The interviews lasted between 21 minutes and 56 minutes depending upon the participants answers and follow up questions. The average for all interviews was 41 minutes.

Data Analysis

The analytic process I used in this study followed a systematic, iterative approach consistent with a modified interpretive phenomenological analysis framework. All the

participant's recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim by me, and each transcript was assigned a coded number to protect participant identity. Moreover, during the transcription process all identifiable names and references were removed from the transcript to further safeguard the identity and confidentiality of the participant, persons, or entities. Following transcription, responses for each specific interview question were compiled on separate documents for analysis (e.g., all responses to interview question 1 were placed on a document labeled Question 1). Although responses were grouped by question for organization purposes, each participant's narrative was also examined holistically to preserve the integrity of their unique perspectives and lived experiences. This strategy allowed for both organizational clarity and idiographic attention. Each question set was read several times by me to understand common categories, context, and patterns of interconnectedness across responses. As commonalities emerged through initial noting of meaning units, inductive descriptive coding was applied, consistent with a modified interpretive phenomenological analysis approach (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

The descriptive codes were evaluated and thematically coded as well. The resultant thematic codes were synthesized into emergent themes for each question. The emergent themes were supported by illustrative participant quotations to demonstrate the findings were grounded in the data. To further ensure faithfulness to participant meaning, emergent themes were re-evaluated against the original transcripts. The emergent themes for each question were compared to demonstrate how they informed the research question. Finally, the emergent themes developed across all questions were evaluated to illuminate broader patterns of meaning across all the emergent themes to develop

overarching themes addressing the central research question and revealing additional insights closely related to phenomenon under study.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence one can have in the truth and findings of a particular qualitative study (Connelly, 2016; Bowen, 2005). Credibility promotes confidence that the information reported is true and believable (Forero et al., 2018). Credibility in this work was enhanced through the study methodology and its' ability to provide an answer to the research question. The sampling strategy also contributed to the credibility of this work. Moreover, due to my experience and knowledge in this area of study, I was able to quickly establish a good rapport with the volunteers. This accomplished communications in the interviews that were simultaneously real, authentic, and transparent providing rich insight into the topic through the experiences of the participants. Moreover, participants were reminded throughout the interview process that their answers were based on their lived experiences and professional opinions, and they were not being judged. This also contributed to authentic and credible information and data. Finally, credibility was enhanced through data saturation and triangulation obtained through numerous interviews.

Data saturation was achieved as evidenced by the following: Saturation was achieved through the consistent recurrence of numerous macro-themes across all fourteen interview questions. By mid-point in data collection, few new concepts emerged, but rather participant responses reinforced previous themes. The frequent use of shared

language and convergence of various participant's perspectives, based on participant's responses, demonstrated conceptual and thematic redundancy. Given the phenomenological and constructivist progressive research instrument, richness and repetition in the data elicited, further interviews were unlikely to yield new insight, thus the element of data saturation was attained.

Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the findings of one study can be either generalize to a population or its applicability to another study (Connelly, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). However, the goal of a phenomenological qualitative study is not to apply to a general population, but rather to document the lived experiences and unique perspectives of a phenomenon within a specific group or set of individuals. The transferability of this study to other law enforcement training and law enforcement trainers is improved through this study's methodological design, purposive sampling, and data saturation. This study used a phenomenological qualitative methodology to evaluate the potential interaction of warrior and guardian mind mentalities on police officer use of force decision making through the lived experiences of law enforcement training personnel. Group Characteristics Sampling, in which participants are selected based on their membership to a specific group to help illuminate group characteristics, and Key Informant and Key Knowledgeable sampling, which works to identify participants with substantial knowledge about the subject of inquiry, were used to yield information known to certified law enforcement training personnel (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Finally, data saturation was achieved through multiple interviews with individuals who met the study's inclusion qualifications.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of data and the findings over time (Bowen, 2005; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Dependability also works to ensure the findings of a qualitative study may be repeated with a similar sample of participants in similar conditions (Forero et al., 2018). Moreover, dependability entails employing a logical argument why the researcher choose a specific methodology to use in the study, that the data is appropriate for answering the research question, and the ability to rationalize the choices that were made throughout the study (Ravitch & Carl,2016).

Dependability was promoted, in part, by using a pilot study. First, pilot study volunteers, with inclusion qualifications consistent with participants later sought for the study, were asked if the interview questions followed a logical pattern that yielded useful data to answer the research question. Next, they were asked if they felt that the interview ultimately answered the research question. The volunteer's feedback indicated that the interview questions were logical and generated data that would answer the research question. They also reported that the research question had been answered through the interview process. The next phase of the pilot study utilized a panel of police executives and police administrators. They were asked the same questions about the interview questions and if the data obtained from the questions answered the research question. The executive panel also stated that they believed questions followed a logical progression, yielded useful data, and did answer the research question.

Dependability in this work was further enhanced by asking a couple questions to study volunteers as the conclusion of each interview. These concluding questions included: 1. Based on your professional experience and knowledge, did the questions asked in this interview accurately answer the research question? The research question was specifically given to the participants at the conclusion of the interview and prior to this question. 2. Based on your professional experience, is there any question, or questions, that I should have asked but not, that should have been included to better or more thoroughly answer the research question? The participant's responses were consistent with those given by the pilot study volunteers. Participants answering these last two follow up questions indicated that the questions followed a logical and practical progression, elicited useful answers, and that ultimately, the information obtained in the interview answered the research question. This helped re-enforce the dependability of this work as the participants had similar inclusion qualifications, are experts in their disciplines, yet differ in their specific skillsets and experiences. Moreover, the interviews were conducted in several different locations and at different time, yet their responses regarding the interview questions, data gleaned from the questions, and that the research question was answered, was consistent among the various participants from both the pilot study and the actual study.

Finally, dependability was enhanced through triangulation. The interviews were held at different locations, at different times, with instructors from different agencies, with differing agency sizes, with diverse demographics, and yet the police instructors

who participated provided information that was generally consistent across the various questions.

Confirmability

Confirmability is similar to the concept of objectivity in quantitative studies; however, qualitative studies do not claim objectivity but rather recognize the inherently interpretive nature of participants' lived experiences and perceptions (Connelly, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). However, qualitative studies should seek confirmability in that the study should be relatively free from unacknowledged researcher bias (Ravitch & Carl 2016).

In this study, confirmability was supported through the use of triangulation and researcher reflexivity. Triangulation was achieved through a well aligned research design and methodology and consistent with the research question, the sampling strategies used, attainment of data saturation, and numerous interviews with diverse individuals at various locations. Researcher reflexivity further enhanced confirmability through continual self-awareness of positionality, maintaining a professional rapport with participants, using effective and relational interviews, and accurate documentation of participant narratives to ensure their meanings were accurately represented. These actions helped to minimize unacknowledged researcher bias and strengthen the credibility and neutrality of the study's findings.

Research Instrument: Interview Questions

1. Based on your experiences, what variables do you believe have greatest influence upon whether or not a police officer uses force? Why?

- a. Would you be willing to tell me a story about a time when you were in a use of force situation with a suspect (preferably a situation more than a non-compliant suspect)? ***Please do not mention names of any other officers, Department names, or other participants
2. Based on your experience as a trainer, does a relationship exist between attitude and behavior?
 - a. If so, can you describe your perceptions of this relationship?
 - b. If so, can you describe how that relationship was manifested?
3. Based on your experiences, in what ways does the way an officer sees their role as a police officer influence their behavior? Does it influence their use of force decisions?
4. Consider 'warrior mentality' - Based on your experiences please provide 5 words that describe the guardian mentality?
5. Consider 'guardian mentality' – Based on your experiences please you provide 5 words that describe the guardian mentality?
6. a. Based on your experience, think about officers whom you believe to have a guardian mentality. What attributes, characteristics, or behaviors, have you observed that caused you to view them in that way?
 - b. Based on your experience, think about officers whom you believe have a warrior mentality. What attributes, characteristics, or behaviors, have you observed that caused you to view them in that way?

7. Through routine training (basic academy, field training, in-service training), in what ways do you feel that police instructors encourage officers to develop a warrior mentality? Based on your experience can you describe how this occurs?
8. Through routine training (basic academy, field training, in-service training), do you feel police instructors encourage officers to develop a guardian mentality? Based on your experience can you describe how this occurs?
9. Based on your experience, what benefits are associated with an officer's aligning with a warrior mentality?
 - a. Are there conditions or circumstances in which the warrior mentality would be detrimental?
10. Based on your experience, what benefits are associated with an officer's aligning with a guardian mentality?
 - a. Are there conditions or circumstances in which the guardian mentality would be detrimental?
11. Based on your experience and perceptions, are the warrior and guardian mentalities mutually exclusive within a police officer? Can you explain why or provide experiential anecdotes to support your answer?
12. Have you experienced a difference in officers displaying characteristics of either a guardian or a warrior mentality based upon:
 - a. Gender of the officer
 - b. Shift assignment (days, evenings, nights)
 - c. Beat environment (urban, suburban, small town, rural)

13. Based on your experience, how do the warrior and guardian mentalities influence whether or not police officers use force?
14. How does an officer's alignment with either the guardian or warrior mentalities influence or effect the degree (or severity) of force used?

Concluding Questions

1. Based on your professional experience and knowledge, did the questions asked in this interview accurately answer the research question? (Provide participants with RQ)
2. Based on your professional experience, is there any question, or questions, that I should have asked but not, that should have been included to better or more thoroughly answer the research question?

The format for the interview questions starts with a generalized question about use of force variables (Question 1) and becomes more specific as the interview proceeds. Question 2 moves to a more personal narrative-based inquiry seeking to probe the participant's direct experience with use of force and the context in which the use of force incident occurred. The combination of these two questions facilitate setting the context and the situational background in which the officer's use of force decision making is made. Questions 3 shifts to explore the participant perceptions of the psychological and behavioral dynamics between an officer's role identification and their behaviors. This question helps to bridge cognition and physical actions and promotes a connection between an internal thought process and an external action. Questions 4 and 5 then ask the participants to begin developing a definition of a warrior mentality and a guardian

mentality based on their experiences. Allowing the participants to create their definitions of the two terms is important. First, by allowing the police trainers to experientially and interpretively define these two terms, differences and similarities between their definitions and the general public's perceptions and definitions may be revealed and analyzed. Second, the participants can then use their experiential definitions to create a foundational context upon which to explain how of these mentalities operate within an officer and how it contributes to their use of force decision making. Questions 6 through 8 asks the participants reflect and assess the characteristics and behaviors of officers who distinctly appear to have either a guardian mentality or warrior mentality based upon their interactions with these officers. Additionally, these questions probe the connection between training and the development of an officer's mentality. This directly helps to assess the postulate that police training strongly influences the development of the warrior mentality in police officers (Stoughton, 2016). Questions 9-12 help to demonstrate the benefits and detriments of the warrior and guardian mentalities in real-world applications based on the lived experiences of the participants. It also probes degree in which the two mentalities are mutually exclusive or the degree in which they may serve the officer symbiotically. In addition, the impact of some common external variables is explored and if they influence how the two mentalities are expressed. Finally, questions 13 – 14 directly ask about how the guardian and warrior mentalities may influence an officer's use of force decision making. The culmination of these interview questions and the participant's responses provides for a holistic rich analysis through a layered introspective structure consistent with qualitative methodology.

Results

The findings for the responses for each question are presented in the following format: First, each interview question is provided followed by a synopsis of the of the emergent categories developed during the analysis of the various participant's responses to the corresponding question. Next, the specific categories developed is presented followed by a brief discussion of the category's importance and relevance to the research question. Samples of the participant's responses are included within each category discussed.

Question 1

Based on your experiences, what variable(s) do you believe have greatest influence upon whether or not a police officer uses force? Why?

Data Summary

The participant's responses indicated that an officer's use of force decision is a dynamic interaction between an officer's internal mindset and external variables. An officer's internal mindset is a product of attributes such as confidence, mental preparation, personal beliefs, and background (Puranda, 2022). Examples of external variables include training quality, physical ability, suspect behaviors, organizational policy, and situational environment. While suspect behaviors is the triggering mechanism for an officer to use force, it is the officer's internal framework that determines when, how much, and how quickly force is applied.

Emergent Themes

Training and skill proficiency. The most common response to this question was not “suspect behavior” or “suspect aggression” as suggested by the literature (Alpert & Dunham, 1997; Morgan et al., 2020). Rather, the most emphasized variable was an officer’s training and the competency. However, when framed through the lens of a police trainer, it is better understood. According to the trainer, training encompasses a diverse number of variables that include understanding a use of force matrix, knowing departmental policy, competency in defensive tactics, de-escalation techniques, and weapons proficiency. They indicated the more competent and confident the officer, the better they are at assessing their options to resolve the situation and to determine the appropriate level of force to use.

A108 noted that “Probably one of the largest or the biggest ones is probably their amount of training that they had. It gives them other avenues on how to deal with a certain situation”. A111 stated “the more training officers are exposed to, the better chance there is that they will be able to handle any given situation appropriately”. Both officers allude to the idea that training enhances judgement, provides options, and promotes better outcomes. Officer A103 stated “officers with no training or little training, I believe they use the wrong level of force”.

Confidence and Mindset. The police instructors spoke on several occasions of the importance of an officer’s personal confidence in their skills, physical abilities, and their mental preparation as significant in the use of force decision making. Confident skillful officers have more options for solving a situation. According to A112 “our

officers will try to de-escalate before they use force because of their training and mental preparation” indicating since they are confident in their abilities they can afford to take more time to work toward a solution before resorting to using force. A111 stated that “an officer’s confidence in themselves has a lot to do with their use of force”. A110 also stated that “If an officer is confident in what they can do physically, they can stay cool, calm, and collective”.

In contrast, A115 said, “I’ve seen some of our officers who are not very confident and they will try to solve those situations with force”. One of the other instructors (A103), responding to a question, said that there is nothing worse than an officer who is afraid because they will resort to using force because they have not skill or confidence to resolve the situation but force. That officer continued that such officers typically use force inappropriately, or excessively, because they lack the training or confidence to solve the problem in some other manner.

Experience. Officers learn from prior personal or observed experiences which help to shape their future use of force decision-making. One instructor noted that all “rookie” officers are “legalistic” in their decision making because they lack the experience to know their options either legally or by their department’s policy to discern how to apply their options because they have poor discretionary skills due to the lack of experience. A109 holds that “Or where you hear of another officer, what they did, how they handled situation one way and where you're like, ‘I hadn't thought about that’. That's a great, you know, that's a great technique or method of dealing with that situation”. A111 said that “Hearing about other officer’s experiences also influences how you

approach use of force scenarios”. And A112 stated “An officer’s past experiences, both personal and observed, influence their inclination toward de-escalation or escalation”.

Cultural and Personal Background. Some instructors noted that how an officer is raised, their family background, religious beliefs, exposure to violence, or military experience moderates the way they respond to use of force incidents potentially pushing them toward using restraint or toward escalation of force. Whether this is a positive or negative effect is dependent upon whether the restraint or escalation was appropriate for nature of the situation. If an officer uses restraint when force should be applied, it is possible that the situation can escalate and endanger people unnecessarily. Likewise, an inappropriate escalation of force that is not legally justifiable is excessive, morally wrong, undermines public trust and police legitimacy, and creates civil liability. A106 posits that “How they were brought up and raised makes a difference.... if they grew up in a in a very religious household then you see them hesitate. If they haven’t been exposed to violence or if they grew up without guns... you see when they get into a force situation they’ll hesitate”.

Suspect Behavior and Situational Awareness. Use of force by police is one of the most researched aspects of police work due to its coercive nature, violence, and impact upon individuals and communities. Not surprisingly, it is an emergent theme to this question. As pointed out by the participants, a suspect’s actions and behaviors are a triggering event influencing an officer’s use of force decision-making and options. Little time will be spent on this suspect behavior for the following reasons. First, it is a well-researched and well-documented fact that suspect behavior is an important variable in an

officer's use of force decision. Second, more germane to this study are the officer's internal perspectives and cognitions that inform their use of force decision-making. Suspect behavior is an external variable. Officer A104 speaks of suspect behavior in "[their] threat of violence to civilians or officers, patterns of resistance, are huge".

However, situational awareness is an internal aspect of the police officer's training and necessary to resolving situations correctly while ensuring everyone's safety. A105 says "A lot is how I read their face, their body movements...what does their face and body tell me about what they are thinking". A112 notes "We teach pre-assault cues, so officers have an idea where this is going to go". A114 states "Situational awareness and being able to define kind of what exactly is going on. The... the level of threat proposed to not only officer, but also his surrounding backing officers, partners, but just the community in general". An officer's proficiency at understanding a situation, the people involved, dynamic interactions and relationships of the parties involved, and then evaluating these variables accurately are critical skills necessary for an officer to appropriately solve a dynamic situation.

Relation to Research Question

Data evaluated in this section suggests that police training instructors generally believe that a suspect's actions and behaviors serve as triggering events. However, they also emphasize that it is an officer's internal mental framework that ultimately shapes both the necessity and way use of force decisions are made and implemented. An officer's confidence in their training, their personal skills, emotional regulation, and situational awareness can promote restraint, facilitate de-escalation, and support

appropriate applications of force. In contrast, fear, lack of confidence, insufficient training or skill development may increase the likelihood poor decision-making, misapplication of tactics for incident resolution, or an inappropriate use of force.

Question 2

Based on your experience as a trainer, does a relationship exist between attitude and behavior?

Data Summary

The responses to question 2 demonstrated a unified agreement among the police trainers that there is a strong correlation between an officer's attitude and their behavior and performance. This finding held true in both training and in patrol performance. Participants who approached training seriously, openly, who worked to master training concepts and skills, were more likely to perform professionally, use better discretion during incident management, and to use force appropriately. In contrast, officers who approached training in a complacent manner, had a know-it-all attitude, or were resistant to training had more disciplinary problems and elevated risks on calls. Overall, their responses emphasized that attitude is not only a fundamental element of effective training, but it is also an important factor in an officer's professional success, in their decision-making, and in their relationships with the communities they serve.

Emergent Themes

Attitude as a Predictor of Field Performance. Some of the instructors noted that an officer's attitude during training was correlated to their behavior and performance in the field. They held that based on their experience they could often predict an officers'

professional performance based on their attitude in training. A115, a firearms instructor, said “We’re seeing all those variables played out at the range... and I can tell you with some accuracy how that officer is going to be in the field later”. A110 said “Attitude plays into it bigtime...”, and “...so professionalism, right, is what we preach here”. On poor attitude impact, A103 says “So the ones that come in here that are kind of strutting their stuff, you can kind of tell pretty quickly that they're gonna be a behavioral issue for us. Nowadays you see quite a few of those ones that were problems here, hot heads here, were biting off more than they could chew here, you see them in the news or no longer being in law enforcement very quickly after that.”.

Receptive Attitude Fosters Growth. Several instructors held that officers or cadets that approached training with openness and were receptive to that which was being taught were more successful in learning the concept or skill and applying it to their profession. Those who are receptive understand that training is an investment in themselves with a future payoff in their career. A104 supports this “The perfect attitude in this setting here is being a sponge and absorbing everything that is being taught”. A106 describes a good attitude and “...don’t be afraid to learn a new way, a new technique, just pay attention and try”. Referencing those with a good attitude, A111 says “They’re attempting at least to prepare themselves, realizing these skills are valuable and part of our job”.

Negative Attitudes Undermine Teamwork and Safety. Officers who exhibit bad attitudes disrupt teamwork, erode trust, and can compromise safety. A106 anecdotally notes an officer he knew with a bad attitude and states “He was trying to sabotage the

shift and basically turn people against each other”. When speaking about officers with a bad attitude, A107 describes them as “...institutional terrorists because they just cause mayhem”. A102 notes that officers with a bad attitude “...are going to rub people the wrong way. He’s definitely going to push their buttons”. A110 was very direct when it comes to an officer with a bad attitude and teamwork, “If you can’t work with other people, I won’t trust you by yourself, in a patrol car, at 3 a.m. at night”.

Arrogance Contrasted with Professionalism. Instructors specifically distinguished between healthy professional confidence and arrogance. They linked arrogance with higher complaint rates, problems with community relations, and perceptions of unprofessional behaviors. A109 states that “Somebody that’s arrogant will absolutely put citizens off” and “...cause more problems”. A108 says that in his experience “An arrogant or smart-aleck attitude puts a barrier between officers and their ability to relate professionally”. A109 says “They’re rude and come across as unprofessional”. A109 held “Confident is definitely more of a person that’s generally much more professional and reels themselves back in”.

Relation to Research Question

This question asks the participants to reflect on how attitude, an internal cognition, influences and external behavior. At this juncture, the question is general allowing the participants to readily assess attitudes and behaviors they have commonly experienced. Police trainers identified attitude as a critical predictor of future performance because, in their experience, an officer’s approach to training strongly correlates to their professional conduct, decision-making, and use of force in the field.

Instructors observed that trainees who were open, engaged, and humble during instruction demonstrated higher levels of professionalism and safer behavior. In contrast, trainees who were arrogant, resistive, or dismissive were more prone to disciplinary issues, poor teamwork, and increased negative outcomes. Having observed these patterns across multiple cohorts has allowed police training professionals to reliably anticipate an officer's future performance based on attitudes the officer exhibited during their academy training. Appropriately, their experiences and insight support the notion that attitude, or mentality, does influence behavior and therefore likely influences decision-making.

Question 3

Based on your experiences, in what ways does the way an officer sees their role as a police officer influence their behavior? Does it influence their use of force decisions?

Data Summary

This question was designed to explore the instructor's experiences with an officer's role perception and to assess its influence on behavior and decision making. Warrior and guardian roles were not mentioned here, but rather various roles were identified that are frequently discussed in academics and in some police training. These examples of the roles included Legalistic, Watchmen, Crime Fighter, Enforcer, Peacemaker, and Peacekeeper (Wilson, 1978; Broderick, 1987; Seigal & Senna, 2007). The police instructors overwhelmingly indicated that an officer's self-perception of their role as a police officer shapes their behavior, decision-making, and their interactions with their community. Officers who view themselves as Protectors, Watchmen, Peacekeepers, and Problem Solvers tended to prioritize communication, de-escalation, relationship-

building, and more discretion in use of force. Though not specifically stated, many of the characteristics of this grouping are consistent with the descriptive characteristics of the guardian mentality as stated by the police instructors. In contrast, those officers who identified more closely as Enforcers, Legalistic, or Crime Fighters were more often characterized by greater assertiveness, heightened suspicion, and quicker escalation of force. In a similar manner, these characteristics paralleled descriptive characteristics later ascribed to the warrior mentality by participants. Several respondents noted that role perception is influenced by participation in the police academy, by field training officers, and societal attitudes and expectations toward police. Collectively, the participants highlighted that an officer's role identity has meaningful implications regarding the officer decision making and use of force.

Emergent Themes

Protector Versus Enforcer. Participants made a distinct delineation between officers who were protectors, guardians, peacekeepers, or counselors in contrast to those who were authoritative, overly focused on enforcement and arrests, and control. An officer's alignment with one group or the other was correlated to how officers would interact with the community and the way they use force. A101 said, "I believe that the calling of law enforcement is to preserve life. We're peacemakers. So for me you know, we're everything we do is in furtherance of that". He also added "...you had to gain people's trust and respect versus demand it. Which takes time". A106 stated, "But I see these that are usually the ones that are the problem solvers, or counselor type, they're nice to everyone first. They don't think about the bad, they don't see the bad in... in everyone.

They're real soft spoken". A104 noted "Cadets who come in with the mindset of peacemaker or protector perform differently in how they treat people". A111 replied that, "Yeah I can think of many people, and it's generally the younger guys, that are all tough, you know. And they think... they're the ones that, you know, they're... they're the enforcers, I guess... they see their role as putting people in jail and showing strength." A110 stated "We need all types of officers... but if you only want to catch bad guys, you won't work well with the community side of policing". A114's sentiment was consistent with A110 regarding how role perception is correlated with the quality of community relations, "Problem solvers tend to find middle ground and de-escalate, while enforcers often escalate to arguments and conflict."

Officer Identity Shapes Decision Making. Role perception was often cited as an influencer for how officers make decisions. Officers who aligned with characteristics consistent with a guardian mentality were thought to handle stress better and make decisions in a more composed manner. Officers who had characteristics consistent with the warrior mentality were more prone to be less flexible in their decisions, more likely to escalate an encounter, and may use force more quickly. This latter point was not necessarily a negative, it depended on the situation being dealt with. This will be discussed in further detail in the analysis of questions 13 and 14. A sampling of the participant's responses include; A103 felt that, "Your proactive guys are quicker to use force" and "Your apprehensive ones might escalate to lethal force unnecessarily because they fear losing control". A116 said "Every officer starts out as an 'enforcer" but over time many learn you can sometimes get more done by not making an arrest". A108 said

“Behavior tells you how they see themselves...”. A115 explained that “Officers more prone to use of force often has a self-image shaped by early mentorship focused on enforcement or aggressive policing”.

Role Perception Affects Community Engagement. How an officer identifies with the characteristics of a role affect how they interact with their community. Those officers with the more guardian type characteristics are more likely to interact with their community in positive way. Those officers whose role identification is more aligned with warrior characteristics tended to see the public in an ‘us versus them’ framework, enforcement, more authoritative and more aloof. Some of the supportive statements from the participants include; A106 states “The problem-solver types are friendly first. They don't treat everyone as a suspect.” A109 offered an insight frequently noted by others, “Some officers have an ‘us versus them’ mentality... Others work with the community to make it a safer, more pleasant place.” A110 points out that “We need all types of officers. But if you only want to catch bad guys, you won't work well with the community side of policing.” A114 makes the point “Problem solvers tend to find middle ground and de-escalate, while enforcers often escalate to arguments and conflict.”

Relation to Research Question

Police training professionals strongly believe that an officer’s role perception has a significant influence on behavior, decision-making, community interaction, and, by extension, the application of force. Participants’ lived experiences indicated that officers who aligned with roles such as Peacekeeper, Protector, and Guardian tend to prioritize de-escalation, communication, community involvement, and restraint in use of force

behaviors. In contrast, those officers who identify more as Legalistic, Enforcer, and Crime Fighter, were perceived as quicker to assert control, were more aloof with the community, perceived as maintaining an “us versus them” worldview, and may resort to use of force more quickly. Many of these characteristics are somewhat aligned with the warrior mentality. While the role of Guardian and Warrior was not specifically used, the participants’ answers provided a professional and contextual understanding that role identification influences decision making, behavior, and community relations.

Question 4

Consider ‘warrior mentality’; Based on your experiences please provide 5 words that describe the warrior mentality?

Data Summary

This question sought to understand the concept of a warrior mentality through the perspective of the police trainers. Their responses, based on their experiences, provide insight to how the warrior mentality is perceived and becomes the framework through which later questions are answered. While this question asked for five descriptive words several participants used short narrative answers to provide additional meaning and context to the word(s) they chose. Table 2 lists the top 10 results of this question in order of frequency.

Table 2*Participant Descriptive Words for the Warrior Mentality*

Descriptive word	Participants who used the descriptive word
1. Courage	A102, A104, A110
2. Determination	A102, A103, A114
3. Vigilant	A105, A115, A116
4. Sacrifice	A101, A110
5. Honor	A101, A109
6. Tough	A102, A109
7. Prepared	A101, A104
8. Confident	A111, A115
9. Protector	A112, A115
10. Integrity	A101

Various definitions for the warrior mentality were provided in Chapter 1. These descriptive definitions were provided from Websters Dictionary and others were provided by citizens in research conducted by several different researchers. For the purpose of comparison to previous definitions, the descriptive words and narratives provided by the participants were entered into an AI program to help generate a descriptive definition for the warrior mentality as provided by the police instructors. The resulting definition is as follows:

The *warrior mentality*, as described by police training professionals, reflects a mindset grounded in resolute determination, disciplined preparedness, and vigilant awareness. Officers with a warrior mentality are marked by an unwavering commitment to completing their duties, even under extreme adversity, demonstrating grit, courage, and a readiness to confront threats. This mentality embodies both physical and mental strength, reinforced by traits such as

toughness, resilience, and perseverance. Central to the warrior identity is a strong adherence to ethical principles, particularly honor, integrity, and self-sacrifice, suggesting that true warriors act not out of aggression but from a profound sense of duty to protect others. Thus, while the warrior mentality includes elements of combat-readiness and dominance, when necessary, it is ultimately anchored in professionalism, moral conviction, and a protector ethos. (OpenAI, 2025)

This definition from the perspectives of the police instructors is insightful and varies significantly from definitions purported by other researchers. Research by Thibodeau et al. (2016) demonstrated that people use mental metaphors to understand new concepts and the world around them. Their study indicated that people, not affiliated with law enforcement or military, viewed police more negatively when asked to describe a warrior mentality. Citizens in their study used terms such as aggressive, fight, and strong. Work by McLean et al. (2018) posit that police with a warrior mentality see fighting crime as their main mission, that they are soldiers in a battle between good and evil. Stoughton (2015) speaks of law enforcement's warrior problem in which police are indoctrinated that they live in an intensely hostile world in which they must be constantly vigilant against an unknown enemy that could be lurking anywhere, waiting to do them harm at any moment. He suggests that this constant awareness of danger causes officers to approach all aspects of their job from that perspective of hyper-vigilance. Samantha Simon (2021) argues that the police training conditions cadets to see their relationship with the public as one of war through a framework of creating a constant, unpredictable

enemy, identification of the enemy among gender and racial lines, and to adopt a warrior mentality.

In my study, I found that the attributes and characteristics of the warrior mentality as described by the police instructors is much different. Their definition suggests determination, preparedness, self-sacrifice, vigilance and courage. It also contains elements of combative skills and the willingness to do violence, but in that it is constrained by professionalism, ethics, and policy. These differences offer key insights on how the warrior mentality may influence use of force decision-making and behaviors.

Relation to Research Question

The participants described the warrior mentality using words such as *courage, determination, vigilance, preparedness, strength, sacrifice, and confidence*. Their responses consistently portrayed the warrior mindset as one characterized by persistent readiness, resilience, mental and physical toughness, and a deep sense of duty. Descriptions also included ethical qualities like honor and integrity. Some participants noted a professional demeanor marked by confidence and calm assertiveness. Based on these descriptions, the data suggests that the warrior mentality, as perceived by these training professionals, prepares officers to maintain high alertness and readiness to act decisively. These preconditioning characteristics may influence officer behavior by developing a proactive and survival-oriented approach during situations where use-of-force decisions may be required.

Question 5

Consider ‘guardian mentality’; Based on your experiences please provide 5 words that describe the guardian mentality?

Data Summary

This question sought to understand the concept of a guardian mentality through the perspective of the police trainers. Their responses, based on their experiences, provide insight to how the guardian mentality is perceived and becomes the framework through which later questions are answered. This question asked for five descriptive words, yet several participants used short narrative answers to provide additional meaning and context to the word(s) they chose. Table 4 lists the top 10 results of this question in order of frequency.

Table 3

Participant Descriptive Words for the Guardian Mentality

Descriptive word	Participants who used the descriptive word
1. Protector / Protective	A102, A109, A110, A112, A114
2. Caring / Compassionate	A104, A109, A110, A115
3. Peaceful / Calm	A101, A115, A106
4. Approachable	A106, A115
5. Mindful / Thoughtful	A107, A111
6. Vigilant	A103, A114
7. Service-oriented	A104, A112
8. Mediator	A114, A101
9. Sacrifice / Sacrificial	A101, A114
10. Problem-solver	A112

Note: 1. Words of similar meaning were grouped together as seen above.

2. Some participants struggled to answer this question and only provided a couple words and a one participant didn't answer the question stating, "I don't know, I've never thought of it".

Various definitions for the guardian mentality were provided in Chapter 1. These descriptive definitions were provided from Websters Dictionary and others were provided by citizens in research conducted by several different researchers. For the purpose of comparison to previous definitions, the descriptive words and narratives provided by the participants were entered into an AI program to help generate a descriptive definition for the guardian mentality as provided by the police instructors. The resulting definition is as follows:

The guardian mentality in policing is defined as a mindset centered on protection, service, relational care, mindfulness, and sacrifice. Officers who embody the guardian mentality view their primary role as protectors of the community, emphasizing the safety and well-being of others over personal gain or aggressive enforcement. This mentality reflects a strong sense of compassion, a peaceful disposition, and a focus on relationship-building with the public. Guardians are mindful and evaluative, carefully considering how their actions serve the broader interests of society, seeking to de-escalate conflicts rather than provoke them. The guardian is seen as a mediator and problem-solver, preferring to resolve issues through communication, guidance, and example rather than force. (OpenAI, 2025)

This definition is important because it provides a rich contextual backdrop for the perceptions of the police trainers of the guardian mentality construct. Moreover, this definition is consistent with the definitions previously noted by other researchers, lending to a consistency of attributes and anticipated behaviors across the groups.

Relation to Research Question

The participants consistently described the guardian mentality using terms such as protector, caring, mindful, and service oriented. This terminology suggests that officers who embody a guardian mindset are more likely to employ thoughtful and measured responses to situations over asserting control or situational dominance. Furthermore, the data indicates that they are more likely to emphasize de-escalation, relationship building, and actions that improve community trust. Finally, the characteristics of mindfulness, thoughtfulness, and compassion suggests they may demonstrate better emotional intelligence compared to those aligned with the warrior mentality. Overall, the collective depiction of guardian mentality traits imply that the guardian mentality may reduce or moderate both the likelihood and the severity of force used.

Question 6a

Based on your experience, think about officers whom you believe have a guardian mentality. What attributes, characteristics, or behaviors, have you observed that caused you to view them in that way?

Data Summary

This question asked the participants to transfer the attributes and characteristics from descriptive wording to behaviors they have seen and experienced with other officers. It further defines the guardian mentality in real-life application. Officers that the participants believed to be aligned with a guardian mentality demonstrated behaviors that were characterized by compassion, problem-solving, protectiveness, supportive, community commitment and integrity. The officers identified as aligning with a guardian

mentality prioritized service and a demonstrate a people centric approach to their service style.

Emergent Themes

Compassion/Empathy. Guardian mentality officers demonstrate care for victims and prioritize support and understanding the victims' needs. A106 said, "If we had a victim on a call, an obvious victim, they were going to do everything that they could to make sure that the victim got what they needed". A110 stated "I mean the guy's a protector, he's a shepherd, he has compassion for people, he cares about those victims, and making sure they have justice, and making sure they're taken care of, and they have all the things they need". A111 added that they were "More compassionate. You know, they were more willing to spend times on things that didn't result in something cool...".

Problem Solving. Guardian-oriented officers behaviors demonstrated prioritized seeking solutions and resolving conflicts. A105 said, "A guardian is...just more of a 'how can I help', 'how can we fix this'. A106 said, "They would go through all their rights, get all the information they could, to try to help them". A114 noted the guardian aligned officer he thought of as "He was the problem-solver of the group. He would take time out of his day to solve any problems you might have with his knowledge or just have time to talk with you".

Protective. Officers aligned with the guardian mentality were portrayed as officers who saw themselves as protectors, motivated by compassion and a passion for service. A104 recalls, "He has committed his entire life to service". A106 added "they're good to go if anything bad happened" and "he'd make sure that the victim got what they

needed”. A110 stated “I mean the guy’s a protector, he’s a shepherd, he has compassion for people, he has compassion for victims and making sure they are taken care of, and they have what they need”.

Supportive. These officers were described as emotionally supportive to both fellow officers and the public. A104 said “We would drive to each other’s houses at 2 or 3 in the morning because I couldn’t sleep, or he couldn’t”. A104 also added, “He takes care of the people he loves. And in this profession, it’s a passion for him”. A111 noted that he “would help you work out your problem, not doing it for you, but helping you along”. A111 said the officer he was thinking about was, “More willing to spend time on things that didn’t result in something cool”.

Community Commitment. Officers described as having a guardian mentality were seen as more approachable and view community relationships as an important aspect of policing. A101 supported this with “Very approachable...not just focused on enforcement, but being friendly and community-oriented”. A101 added, “He was basically friends with everybody...very approachable”. A107 described guardian-oriented officers as “Their job wasn’t just to go write tickets on I-35, they’re actually supposed to be involved and be a part of their community”. He also added, “It’s not ‘us against them’, it’s ‘we’re all in this together’”. A114 stated, “As far as you know the community policing and being there for fellow officers, talking with the public in his personal life, that’s how he was all around”.

Relation to Research Question

Oklahoma police training professions reported experiences with officers who exhibited attributes associated with the guardian mentality. These professionals linked the guardian mentality to characteristics likely to influence officers' use of force decision-making, greater restraint, empathy, and a focus on proactive problem-solving. Moreover, the strong emphasis on problem-solving and emotional support suggests that officers with a guardian mentality may be better equipped to manage high-stress situations without resorting to unnecessary force. Finally, these findings indicate the guardian mentality may serve as a moderating influence on use of force decision making potentially reducing the likelihood, severity, and frequency of use of force behavior through foundational commitments to empathy and community collaboration.

Question 6b

Based on your experience, think about officers whom you believe have a warrior mentality. What attributes, characteristics, or behaviors, have you observed that caused you to view them in that way?

Data Summary

This question asked the participants to transfer the attributes and characteristics from descriptive wording to behaviors they have seen and experienced with other officers. It further defines the warrior mentality in real-life application. Officers that the participants believed to be aligned with a warrior mentality are characterized by a somewhat stoic, reliable, tactically competent, confident officer with a strong sense of duty and mission focus. Officers affiliated with having a warrior mentality have a no-

nonsense attitude toward their responsibilities and a more aggressive approach to high-risk situations. They are frequently focused on training, self-improvement, with a deep commitment to team or officer safety. Officers with a warrior mentality are described as deeply loyal to those they trust, but frequently come across to others, citizens in particular, as less outwardly compassionate or empathetic. The attributes and behaviors of officers more aligned with a warrior mentality, as describe by the participants, make them highly sought out in high-risk situations or for high-risk job assignments such a Special Weapons and Tactics (S.W.A.T.) units.

Emergent Themes

Tactical Dependability / Reliability. Officers with a warrior mentality are highly dependable in critical incidents and trusted to act decisively and competently. This theme is likely to be highly correlated to the thematic attributes ‘Strong Work Ethic and Discipline’ and “Professionalism”. A103 said, “When stuff went south, he was the dude you wanted there next to you in the fight because he just showed up and handled business”. A104 notes that “We didn’t have to communicate. We were fluid, we were smooth, we got it taken care of, whatever the situation was”. A110 added “That’s the warrior mentality I think of. Man, we’re down for the chase, we’re down for whatever, let’s do this thing!”. A114 said, “When it came down to a fight, he was the one you wanted”.

Serious Demeanor / Stoicism. Officers with a warrior mentality were described as serious, focused, and having an ‘all-business’ demeanor. A103 said “He was extremely intelligent, but extremely quiet, until it was time to get work done”. A107 notes that

“They weren’t necessarily the nicest guys around. Not the guys you wanted to invite over for dinner”. A107 also added, “He was always serious. Not a great sense of humor, but he is a good, solid guy”. A111 states that officers with a warrior mentality were “More serious. Like, down to business. Maybe less compassion, less empathetic”. In a side conversation outside of the interview, about this topic, A116 said of himself “I don’t speak to too many people. I’m focused, I train hard, I’m driven. I get the job done on hot calls. I don’t have the time, or respect, for anyone who isn’t of the same mindset”.

Reserved Personality. This is a similar attribute to “serious demeanor”, but it is different in that these officers tend to be very reserved, somewhat socially isolated, and seem to only be comfortable within small, trusted circles of like-minded officers. Some participants provided examples of this behavior: A101 who said, “The warrior guys were a lot more, again that alone thing, they weren’t... they weren’t unfriendly, they weren’t unprofessional, but they didn’t associate a lot outside of their sphere. I guess and sometimes the warrior guys aren’t approachable, at all”. A105 notes, “They’re just more reserved. Quiet and reserved”. A106 said, “They don’t talk a whole lot to people, somewhat to partners, but not always” and “They’re not very open or trusting”. A107 also said, “They didn’t have a lot of a sense of humor. They were nothing but business”.

Aggressiveness. Officers that were thought to align with the warrior mentality displayed a certain level of aggressiveness and a readiness to take control in any given situation. A103 describes them as “Taking initiative without needing direction”. A104 said “Immediately we took control” and “We could start at a lower intensity, but if we had to go higher, we could”. A106 recalls “They were aggressive on every call, every situation”.

Disciplined Work Ethic. Officers who were attributed attitudes and behaviors characteristic of the warrior mentality strived for continuous improvement, self-training, and committed to physical readiness. A104 notes “We’d take out own money, we’d buy our own ammo, and we’d go train on our own. We’d find schools that we’d pay for ourselves to get extra training”. A110 states, “Dedicated to staying prepared with their weapon systems and personal combatives. They have a hard work ethic, reliability, trustworthiness, and that gameness”.

Determination / Mental Fortitude. Persistence, endurance, and unyielding were common attributes of officers believed to have a warrior mentality. The was shown in the following statements: A107 “They were determined to protect those who could not protect themselves”. A110 “Mentally prepared for anything that could happen”. A114 “He had that drive to not quit. He could keep going, further and further...”.

Silent Professionalism. Those with a warrior mentality frequently demonstrated it through quiet confidence and effectiveness, not through words or boasting. A105 reiterated this point in several ways. “They have stories, but they don’t tell them”. “When work gets done without saying anything, that tells you they’re a warrior”. “You can tell by their presence”. “If a ‘warrior’ has to tell you they’re a ‘warrior’, he’s probably not”. A107 supports this with “They lead by example, not by talk”.

Morality Based on Duty, not Ideology. Those with warrior mentalities seem to be driven by an highly developed internal sense of duty rather than ideology or for recognition. A107 made several statements in support of this. “They weren’t bad guys, they were just all business”. “You could count on them to do the right thing when nobody

was looking”. “Why wouldn’t you do that? It’s the right thing to do”. A110 adds “They are focused on doing the job correctly and ethically”.

Relation to Research Question

This analysis of officers who are believed to be aligned with the warrior mentality are described as reliable, tactically sound, and mentally resilient and focused during high-risk situations. These qualities may foster a readiness to act decisively in volatile or dangerous situations. Other attributes such as stoicism, aggression, and a control orientation may predispose these officers to a more assertive, and potentially aggressive, approach to situations. Moreover, there are also descriptors of control and dominance that may also increase the likelihood to escalate use of force. Finally, attributes such as isolation, reservation, and reduction of compassion or empathy associated with officers possessing a warrior mentality, may inhibit communications with citizens. Collectively, according to the respondents, officers who they describe as having a warrior mentality, may have an increased propensity for use of force as this mentality tends to prioritize aggressiveness, control, and tactical readiness.

Question 7

Through routine training (basic academy, field training, in-service training), in what ways do you feel that police instructors encourage officers to develop a warrior mentality? Based on your experience can you describe how this occurs?

Data Summary

The responses from the police instructors strongly suggest that instructors often deliberately cultivate a warrior mentality through physical, psychological, and situational

exercises. This mentality is framed as essential for officer survival, especially in high-threat encounters. Overall, training is meant to emphasize both resilience under duress and the capacity to use force appropriately. The participants also recognized the necessity for balance with soft skills or more 'guardian-like' skills as not all police encounters are adversarial.

Two important points at this juncture. First, there is some overlap, or confusion, over the differentiation between a 'warrior mindset' and a 'warrior mentality' within this question as it was being answered by the police instructors. A warrior mindset is necessary for an officer's survival in a high-threat situation. The key is that 'warrior mindset' is situational and is used for the duration of that situation. The 'warrior mentality' is a more enduring outlook. One example, the warrior mentality may be manifest in a generalized 'us versus them' perspective where 'us' are the police and 'them' is everyone else. Stoughton (2015) describes the 'warrior mentality' as police living in a state of hypervigilance as they are taught that they live in an intensely hostile world, where everyone is literally gunning for them, and death is only one small misstep away. All people are judged as a potential threat and treated accordingly. Second, the frequency and proactive instruction promoting a warrior mindset or mentality, often depended upon what skillset was being taught. For instance, firearms training focuses on marksmanship and the legal and moral application of deadly force. In this skill training the direct threat to the officer is at its' highest level and therefore the 'warrior mindset or mentality' is intensely promoted. However, in Defensive Tactics training, the threat level to the officer is still elevated, but not to the degree of firearms and deadly force. The

warrior mindset or mentality is still emphasized, but perhaps not to the level it was in firearms. Finally, in de-escalation training, the warrior mindset or mentality may not be emphasized at all.

Emergent Themes

Combat Readiness and Survival. Much of the training has an explicit emphasis on survival and mental preparation for violent encounters. This training included preparing cadets for worst case scenarios and encouraging mental toughness. A103 “You have to have a little bit of warrior mindset in you to make it through the tough times”. A104 relates the seriousness of this training in “It's so easy to quit! However, you need to find a reason why you're not quitting. Because here's the thing, is if you quit, in here, when you do that out there, you're not going home.”. Speaking on Active Shooter Response training said, “We run toward the gunfire, we push that you stay in the fight”. A105 stated “We have to teach them survival if the situation becomes a two-way shooting range”. A111 puts it this way “You may have to do violence for yourself or for others”.

Use of Stress Inoculation and Pressure-Based Training. Several instructors noted the use of controlled stress environments to simulate real-world pressure. These methods were particularly prevalent in Defensive Tactics and Firearms training as a tool to help cadets develop mental endurance and resilience. A104 speaking about defensive tactics training said “Each exercise is more intense than the other, each has a little more stress added to it. Tonight's probably going to be the hardest thing some of these cadets have ever done”. Speaking on firearms training, A115 stated “How do you train that

warrior mentality without pushing someone hard?”. A115 asks “Can they persevere? Can they maintain their thought processes under stress?”.

Instruction Embedded in Specific Training Modules. The warrior mentality is most heavily emphasized in specific training modules such as Firearms, Defensive Tactics, Active Shooter Response, and Patrol where immediate action, control, and survival are critical. A110 said that “Most of the warrior training comes from DT, SWAT, patrol tactics, and the firearms range”. In speaking about Active Shooter Response training, A112 said, “Active Shooter training, we teach them to move now – don’t you wait. The mantra we tell them is every round you hear is a life [taken]” specifically talking about entering a building in which an active shooting is in progress.

Mental Conditioning. Police instructors encourage cadets to adopt a mindset of constant engagement and proactive action, defining the warrior mentality as one of decisiveness rather than passivity or hesitation. This can be particularly difficult, but necessary, as many recruits have never been in any kind of violent encounter prior to being a police cadet. A109 “We teach them that you must stay engaged no matter what happens”. A110 “I believe in being default aggressive: I’m going to move! It’s a mindset where even moving backwards is movement, you’re not standing still”. A114 notes “You have to stay in the fight, not matter what”.

Evolution of the Training Culture. Some of the police instructors expressed concern that modern training is less physically and mentally demanding due to external pressures such as liability management, media scrutiny, and societal expectations. These changes may inhibit developing a strong warrior mentality. A110 was concerned stating,

“We used to do a much better job at it – training gameness and survivability. I don’t know that it’s changed for the better. I think we train more to avoid liability now”. A115 said “Training today is a lot less yelling and pushing cadets hard. It’s difficult to replicate real-world stress inside the academy walls”. A105 related a story in which he told this researcher of how many cadets used to get eliminated from the academy because they were not able to step up into a warrior mentality when they needed to for survival. He continued that now, due to changing expectations and civil liability, they rarely eliminate any cadets. His concern at the end, was how many cadets will get hurt as officers or how many civilians will get hurt, because they can’t dismiss what he would consider ‘unqualified’ cadets from the academy.

Relation to Research Question

Participants consistently described how training programs intentionally cultivate attributes associated with the warrior mentality to prepare officers for violent and unpredictable confrontations and increase their survivability. The police instructors also emphasized the necessity to integrate aspects of the guardian mentality, both to temper the warrior mentality and to guide behavior in situations where the application of force is unwarranted. Taken together, the data suggests that while the warrior mentality is critical for responding to immediate threats requiring force, the guardian mentality is equally important for managing encounters where force may not be necessary. Thus, the influence of the warrior and guardian mentalities appears situationally dependent, collectively working to shape an officers’ readiness, decision-making, and use of force behaviors in dynamic situations and unpredictable circumstances.

Question 8

Through routine training (basic academy, field training, in-service training), do you feel police instructors encourage officers to develop a guardian mentality? Based on your experience can you describe how this occurs?

Data Summary

The collective responses indicate that police instructors do encourage the development of a guardian mentality through formal training in the police academy. The guardian mentality training is commonly found within training modules on community relations, mental health awareness, and de-escalation tactics. However, this training is taught alongside of, and may be overshadowed by, the emphasis of the warrior mentality for survival in critical incidents. Several instructors noted that the more successful officers are those that can move seamlessly between the guardian and warrior roles as the situation dictates.

Emergent Themes**Guardian Mentality Encouraged Through Community-Focused Training.**

The police instructors communicated that they encourage the development of the guardian mentality primarily in training blocks that emphasize community engagement, de-escalation tactics, and service-oriented training. A102 stated that “You get him out there as a guardian, that they are guardians, you’re out there to protect and serve, so that’s what you need to be”. A103 supported teaching guardian mentality as being a protector, “You have to be some type of guardian to...to take on that role, to be a protector of your community”. A112 adds “We want people to see us out there”. A114

notes that they teach ‘problem-solving’ and “...having that mentality of ‘What do I have here and how can I help?’ which promotes a guardian mentality.

Specific Training Modules Foster Guardian Mentality Attributes. Certain training modules directly promote guardian mentalities and behavior. A106 “Domestic violence training focuses on helping someone, protecting them in some aspect”. A114 said that “Virtual scenarios help officers practice discerning if a situation needs a guardian approach versus an enforcement”. A115 provides “Though communications training, officers learn to build relationships, not just enforce laws”. A112 felt that more guardian mentality training happens in field training “The FTO program focuses on officers being visible, approachable, and teaching guardian practices”.

Guardian and Warrior Mentalities are Taught in Tandem. Officers are taught both guardian and warrior mentalities and to adjust their responses as situations dictate. A103 says “We have to teach a little bit on the warrior mindset attached to that guardian mindset”. A107 states “I hope that we're teaching a blend of both. Preferably they have a... the new... the next generation of police officers will have a guardian mindset. The concept. And... but be able to flip that switch to that warrior’s mindset when needed”. A108 said “We train both. In Active Shooter training, you have to have the warrior mindset to find the threat, but you also have to have the guardian mentality of protecting the people inside”.

Difficulty in Teaching Both the Guardian and Warrior Mentalities. Police instructors acknowledge the importance of the guardian mentality, but they also recognize the importance of the warrior mentality for survival in that it may dominate the

training. They also note that cadets must develop the ability to efficiently switch from a guardian mentality to a warrior mentality, as circumstances dictate, and then back to the guardian mentality. This can be a difficult task, though a required and expected one.

A103 states “We teach both, but survival often dominates due to the dangerous world we live in”. A104 reflects “I have demonstrations and PowerPoints that show you that you have to protect citizens...but I probably should hit more on the guardian side. I don’t hit the guardian side as much as I do the warrior side. However, I do tell them you have to protect citizens”. A107 puts it this way “We hope to teach a blend...”. A109 describes the combination of the mentalities like this, “Because the guardian should... I mean... can turn on that warrior. Yeah, it can turn on the warrior mindset in a heartbeat”. A111 says “The lines between the enemy and the friendly aren’t always clear here. That makes the guardian emphasis necessary, but hard to balance”.

Relation to Research Question

Participants emphasized the importance of training that fosters a guardian mentality to reinforce the officers’ roles as protectors and problem-solvers within their communities. Such training fosters traits include relationship-building, the exercise of restraint, and the demonstration of empathy toward citizens, which collectively reduces the likelihood of unnecessary or excessive use of force. Simultaneously, police instructors acknowledge that the warrior mentality remains an essential component of police training. Without the attributes associated with the warrior mentality, officers may fail or hesitate to act decisively to threats, potentially resulting in greater harm to themselves or others. Ultimately, the police instructors underscore the necessity of

cultivating both the guardian and the warrior mentalities, emphasizing the critical importance of an officers' ability to fluidly shift between roles as situational demands dictate. This dual-role capability is essential for appropriate and effective use of force decision making and for navigating the full spectrum of encounters officers may face in the field.

Question 9

Based on your experience, what benefits are associated with an officer's aligning with a warrior mentality?

Data Summary

Police instructors overwhelmingly associated the alignment with the warrior mentality with critical operational benefits especially in high-risk or life-threatening circumstances. They emphasized that officers with a warrior mentality were tactically reliable, mentally prepared, disciplined, and physically fit. They were further described as action-oriented displaying characteristics of initiative and assertiveness in both high-stress situations as well as in daily routine activities. Several participants also noted that the benefits of the warrior mentality are contingent on situational appropriateness cautioning that that the officers must be able to de-escalate or deactivate the warrior mentality to avoid inappropriate or excessive use of force.

Emergent Themes

Tactical Reliability / Survival Preparedness. Officers with a warrior mentality are considered essential in high-risk situation and when lives are at stake. The attributes of the warrior mentality prepare them to act decisively and effectively, especially when

lives are at stake. A101 stated “...the guys with the warrior mentalities are the ones you want on the hot calls”. A103 adds “You can trust that if there is a gunfight going on they’re going to show up and get that person in custody”. A104 also states “You are always prepared. You’re ready to go to work when work needs to be done”. A106 said “Officers survive life and death confrontations because they have that warrior mentality...”. A112 believes while on hot calls “If I have to tell you to go, I’m not sure you should be here, you know what I mean? Like I shouldn't have to tell you to go, warrior mentality you'll just go because you need to”.

Mental and Physical Discipline. Participants associated determination, perseverance, and physical fitness with the warrior mentality. They posit that these attributes contribute to better decision making in high-stress, high-risk situations. They also provide a positive example to others and push others to be better. A102 said “Determination, not giving up. You’re trying to fight for your survival”. A104 said “You’re always prepared”. A105 on preparation states “Understanding that you may have to take a life... So, a warrior mindset is always, I believe, as ready as I can be for that”. A114 speaks to their motivating influence “He’s a machine when it comes to working...he motivates and pushes the rest of us” and “...having that mentality pushes everyone to do better”. A115 adds “I think the warrior mentality someone who is training, they're physically fit, they're keeping themselves and their appearance up. I think that's an encouragement to those around you”.

Action-Oriented Problem Solving. Officers described as having a warrior mentality as seen as proactive, assertive, willing and able to act decisively in critical

incidents. A103 states “No qualms about getting into a fight, to end it, and to get the person in custody”. A105 believes “A warrior mindset is always, I believe, being as ready as I can be...”. A107 states “Sometimes somebody’s just gotta get dirty and get in there and get the job done”. A110 said “It’s those people with the warrior mentality who are aggressive, ready to move, and to take action”. A114 posits “We’re all Type A personalities”.

Situational Modulation. Several police instructors noted that while the warrior mentality is beneficial in many instances, officers with a warrior mentality must be able to “turn it on and off”. They must be able to apply it selectively according to the demands of the situation. A106 says “They have to be able to turn on the warrior mindset and then turn it off, to save people”. A107 speaking about the attributes and behaviors of officers with a warrior mentality “It’s not always needed, it’s not always welcome, and it’s not always the best thing”. A109 talking about officers with a warrior mentality “As long as they don’t go above and beyond...”.

Relation to Research Question

Oklahoma police training professionals perceive the warrior mentality as having a significant, yet highly situational, influence on police use of force decision-making and behavior. The warrior mentality is viewed essential under conditions that demand immediate, decisive, and possibly forceful actions where officer survival or public protection is paramount. The participants emphasize that many of the warrior mentality qualities support appropriate use of force decisions under extreme conditions. However, they also cautioned that officers with a warrior mentality must be able to temper their

actions with emotional regulation and to modulate their behaviors to ensure the use of force is lawful and ethically grounded.

Question 9a

Are there conditions or circumstances in which a warrior mentality would be detrimental?

Data Summary

Participants jointly stressed that the warrior mentality can become detrimental when officers lack discipline, misjudge scenarios, or are not able to regulate aggression appropriately. Some police instructors pointed out that without proper restraint the warrior mentality can lead to diminished empathy, impaired judgement, and excessive use of force. Others mentioned that the warrior mentality can have a long-term emotional and relational toll due to sustained hyper-vigilance. Examples of these to problems include, but are not limited to, alienation, health issues, and psychological fatigue. Overall, left unchecked the warrior mentality can cause significant harms both professionally and personally.

Emergent Themes

Escalation and Excessive Use of Force for Lack of Discipline or Judgement.

Police trainers consistently warned that without sufficient or proper discipline or situational awareness, officers with a warrior mentality may escalate encounters unnecessarily or resort to excessive use of force. A102 notes this stating “When you’re not disciplined enough to have a warrior mindset you excessively utilize the force when it’s not perceived, or needed, or not justified”. A103 said “Maybe they got a little

aggressive because they were in that warrior mode”. A112 also notes excessive aggression “Perhaps they’re too aggressive at times at the expense of due caution...you have to know when you’re supposed to do that, and when you’re not”. A116 holds the warrior mentality is detrimental when “The officer didn’t have any discipline, and didn’t know when to use it [force]. When he thinks everything’s going to be use of force”.

Inability to Transition Between Warrior and Guardian Roles. The participants highlighted that rigid adherence to a warrior mentality, without the flexibility to adjust to the guardian mentality during non-confrontational encounters, can be detrimental to effective policing. A109 said “If you can’t show a little bit of caring, and kindness, and gentleness at times, it can be totally detrimental”. A111 notes “I don't mean that's like I'm offended by that, you know, it's sometimes portrayed, or people maybe think of it as like we are being physically offensive. Like we're out there looking to be to use force on people, you know. We're bullying people, or being excessive, when you have that ‘warrior mindset’ kind of deal, you know, right. And we kind of shoot ourselves in the foot with that stuff sometimes”. A114 said that “Being able to shut it down, I think is difficult. And not having the ability to revert back to a type of more of the guardian role can be, you know.” And “Some people have a difficult time shutting that off and going back to that. So, it's great to push up to it, but being able to revert back... if you can't do it, then yeah, that can be detrimental”.

Emotional and Relational Toll from Sustained Hyper-Vigilance. Participants described the deep personal and professional cost of prolonged hyper-vigilance associated with the warrior mentality, including emotional burnout, health problems, and

strained relationship with family, peers, and the community. A105 a military veteran and longtime police officer said this “There is no rest or peace because of the constant required vigilance...that leads to why we have heart attacks at an early age and why we die shortly after retirement”. He also adds “Our body’s not meant to stay at that heightened alertness for long periods of time...soldiers do it. Police officers do it. But it’s not healthy”. A106 said of officers who cannot transition out of the warrior mentality “They alienate family, they push them away because they can’t figure out how to turn that off...”. He added “... it can go into excessive force and stuff like that” and “Nightmares. This can also manifest on the street, at the low side of just being grumpy and mean...all the way up to excessive force if it’s not kept under control”. A110 states “If you don’t take your ‘warrior hat’ off when you go home and put your ‘dad hat’ and your ‘husband hat’, it can really cause you problems”.

Relation to Research Question

While the warrior mentality can prepare officers for high-risk situations, participants emphasized that without proper discipline, emotional regulation, and situational judgement, it can lead to unnecessary escalation and inappropriate or excessive use of force. The police instructors explained how unchecked warrior mentality traits such as hyper-vigilance, aggression, and control can cloud judgment, reduce communication, and foster an over-reliance on force and control. Furthermore, they highlighted those officers with a warrior mentality who lacked the ability to transition between guardian and warrior roles was particularly detrimental. Officers who remain locked in a combat-ready mode failed to appropriately adapt to the dynamic needs of

policing. Collectively, Oklahoma police training professionals note the values of a warrior mentality but believe its misapplication can negatively influence an officer's use of force decision-making and use of force behaviors.

Question 10

Based on your experience, what benefits are associated with an officer's aligning with a guardian mentality?

Data Summary

The participants consistently describe the guardian mentality as a role that fosters stronger community relationships, enhances communication, promotes de-escalation, and supports effective operational performance in non-emergency situations. Officers believed to align with the guardian mentality were perceived to be more approachable, trustworthy, emotional intelligent, and worked more diligently toward peaceful resolutions thereby reducing the likelihood of force. Overall, the participants communicated clearly that the guardian mentality, when integrated with situational awareness and tactical flexibility, humanizes policing and moderates use of force behaviors while maintain operational effectiveness.

Emergent Themes

Enhanced Community Engagement. The guardian mentality promotes stronger community relationships between officers and the community. Officers seen as protectors rather than enforcers are more likely to gain public trust, cooperation, and respect, which can foster aid in future investigations, more cooperative interactions, and community support. This is particularly salient in that the majority of police work is not high-risk,

life-endangering incidents, but rather calls that require personal interactions rather than enforcement and control. A107 says it this way, “Knowing your community and helping them is huge!” and “You have a beat where you can get to know people on a personal level...there’s definite advantages of being on the personal level”. A114 said, “Having that mentality of ‘I’m here for the community’ is vital. If you don’t have that guardian mentality, you don’t just lose respect, but also the community’s vision of as a helper”. A115 states, “I think that's it's a good every day. I think there should be that element in everyone. Being present in your in your community and in your area, developing those relationships”.

Superior Communication and De-escalation Skills. Officers with a guardian mentality excel in using communication and de-escalation over force. Collectively, they demonstrate greater patience, empathy, and emotional intelligence, often leading to more peaceful resolutions and fewer complaints from citizens. Speaking about high-risk calls, A108 notes “If you went into a hostage situation with the warrior mentality on the front side, it probably wouldn’t end well. Negotiation, the patience, the trying to talk him out, that’s the guardian as the protector”. A109 observes “Where someone needs help and compassion, I think the guardian is tuned more into that and more able to provide that. Calls involving kids or abuse situations, where someone needs that compassion...the guardian is better equipped”. A116 said “You can talk a lot more people down than you think...just let me try and talk a little bit longer before I go there [use of force]”.

Effective in Nonemergency, Investigative, and Routine Policing Tasks. Police instructors recognize that officers aligning with a guardian mentality are highly effective

in routine, investigative, and administrative police work where building rapport, gathering information, attention to detail, and careful follow-up are essential. A106 said “They’re going to want to help, and protect, and do what they can. Get all the information and do what they need to do to care of that”. A111 says that “Guardians are good for everyday police work...investigations...and following up with people on the little stuff... not just chasing action but doing investigations and caring about outcomes”.

Balanced and Discretionary Use of Force. Officers with a guardian orientation are more likely to utilize thoughtful discretion before resorting to force. They are perceived as being better able to assess situations, attempt verbal resolution first, and avoid unnecessary escalation.

A106 noted “Not everyone is trying to kill you, most calls can be handled in a good way without force”. A110 says, “Protecting other officers and people without immediately rushing in sometimes requires guardian mentality thinking first”. When reflecting on the guardian mentality, A112 states “Let’s analyze what we got in front of us before we press in. The guardian might initially pause to protect others while assessing the bigger picture and not just rush into danger”. A116 added, “Sometimes, yes, I can put this guy on the ground but let me try and talk with him a little bit longer”.

Complimentary to Warrior Traits in High-Risk Situations. While emphasizing the benefits of the guardian mentality, the police instructors pointed out the necessity that the guardian mentality must be complimented by the warrior mentality when rapid, decisive police action is required. The flexibility to fluidly transition between the two mentalities is viewed as critical. A101 notes “The guardian is more

healing and restorative. I think there's absolutely time for both [guardian and warrior mentalities] in law enforcement". A108 said "In a hostage situation, you may start as a guardian, but you must transition into a warrior if necessary". A111 speaking of himself, "I will be a guardian, until I've gotta be a warrior. It's not my default to be offensive, but I will". A110 says of guardians who cannot transition to warriors "You might find yourself not 'running with scissors' when you should be. Guardianship can delay immediate needed action if not balanced". A112 adds "When it's time for action, we need warriors. When it's time to think, we need guardians".

Relation to Research Question

Participant responses clearly demonstrate their beliefs that the guardian mentality serves as moderating influence on police use of force decision-making and behavior. Attributes associated with the guardian mentality described are perceived as directly reducing the frequency, necessity, and severity of police force. Furthermore, the guardian mentality was linked to the development of emotional intelligence and relational policing strategies, which further support de-escalation strategies. Of particular significance is the recognition of the essential duality between the guardian and warrior roles within both the officer and effective police operations. Officers are encouraged to exhaust all non-force options first, but they must fluidly shift to a warrior mentality when rapid, decisive force is necessary. This dynamic balance between relational engagement and tactical readiness is regarded as essential for effective policing.

Question 10a

Are there conditions or circumstances in which a guardian mentality would be detrimental?

Data Summary

The participant's responses revealed a nuanced understanding of how the guardian mentality, though generally beneficial, can become detrimental under certain circumstances. Several of the police instructors warned that the guardian mentality was detrimental in officers when they prolonged encounters, failed to act decisively, or continued in unfruitful negotiations, thereby potentially increasing risk to themselves and others. Other instructors emphasized that the guardian mentality became a detriment when officers failed to transition from a protective guardian role to a warrior role that in which they could act more decisively or forceful thereby missing opportunities to neutralize active threats. Finally, some instructors cautioned that some officers with a guardian mentality were overcommitted to dialogue and not tactically or situationally aware of dynamics in the encounter, thus reducing their effectiveness in public or officer safety. Overall, it was the perceptions of the police instructors that the effectiveness of those aligning with a guardian mentality hinged on the officer's capacity to dynamically adjust their posturing to evolving circumstances, especially those requiring immediate, forceful intervention.

Emergent Themes

Hesitation or Delayed Use of Force. Many of the participants emphasized that officers with a predominate guardian mentality may hesitate or delay taking immediate,

decisive, or forceful actions quick enough. This is significant in two respects. First, the longer an encounter is prolonged, particularly when discussions are not successful and suspect agitation is escalating, the more time there is for someone to get hurt. The second aspect is that when direct intervention, or use of force, is delayed when it was appropriate to use, officers may have to use more force to get the situation under control than what they would have used if they had used force earlier in the encounter. Both scenarios can lead to an increased risk of injury to both civilians and officers. Several statements made by the police instructors support this. A101 “All we are doing by prolonging this is putting ourselves in greater danger”. A102 “It’s detrimental when you need to be taking a warrior mindset and the action needs to be taken care of in that situation”. A104 speaking on responding to aggressive encounters “If you’re more on the reactive side, that’s going to be a downfall [not transitioning from guardian to warrior mentality] because you have to counter them at some point”. A111 said “If they don’t understand that part of being a guardian is protecting people...and they’re just hoping it [violence] never happens, that would be a detriment’. A115 “If a guardian can’t turn on a level of aggression at the right time, that could be detrimental”.

Inability to Transition to Warrior Mode. Participants warned of the danger of officers being stuck in a guardian mentality when the situation demands a rapid transition to a warrior mentality. A102 said “It’s detrimental where there is a situation where you need to be taking a warrior mindset [and you’re not] and that action needs to be taken care of”. Speaking on the importance of being able to make the transition A106 states “One would be... maybe if they are in a bad situation, and they need to get out of that

guardian and go into the warrior mindset they might not be able to do that transition”.

A109 notes the dangers if an officer is stuck in a guardian mentality “...if they can’t move from that to their warrior mindset and jump into action, that’s bad”. A112 shared regarding an active shooter situation “Quit trying to save people out of a guardian kind of mentality, you need to stop the shooter first”. A115 speaks of the detriment of an officer with a guardian mentality who cannot transition “If you’re only relational and you can’t step up when it’s dangerous, hard, or an unknown risk situation”.

Overcommitment to Dialogue or Relational Policing. Instructors also noted that an excessive reliance on negotiation or relational police, at the expense of timely enforcement, can place the public and officers at risk. A106 states “...quit trying to counsel everyone...But there comes a time when it’s like if they’re doing bad things with a gun, you have to stop the bad things from happening”. A111 says “When they're not prepared to do violence or to use force. If they don't understand that that's part of being a guardian. Like that would be a detriment”. A101, speaking about an encounter that had become violent, “[my partner] was still trying to talk him into handcuffs...and I’ m like we’re not sitting here negotiating what he is going to do”.

Relation to Research Question

Police training instructors believe the guardian mentality can exert both a positive and a negative influence on police use of force depending upon situational demands and the officer’s ability to transition to the appropriate role required for resolving the situation. Respondents emphasized the guardian mentality may become detrimental when officers fail to act decisively in the face of imminent threats. These findings indicate that

a guardian mentality can reduce the likelihood of inappropriate use of force when properly balanced with a warrior mentality. But, if officers cannot fluidly a warrior mentality and use force when circumstances dictate, then the safety of all may be jeopardized. Thus, police instructors view adaptability between mentalities a critical competency that has a direct influence on use of force decision-making.

Question 11

Based on your experience and perceptions, are the warrior and guardian mentalities mutually exclusive within a police officer? Can you explain why or provide experiential anecdotes to support your answer?

Data Summary

Participants conveyed a shared experiential understanding that the warrior and guardian mentalities are not mutually exclusive within effective police officers, but rather coexisting roles that must be dynamically balanced in practice. Based on their experiences, the police instructors described the necessity of both roles as situational demands fluctuate. They detailed how officers must fluidly shift between roles, often within the same call, to address the complex and dynamic realities of contemporary policework. Their narratives reflect the deeply embedded belief that a well-rounded officer must develop emotional intelligence, discretion, relational capacity, and tactical assertiveness, and role adaptability to meet the demands of effective policing.

Complimentary Nature of Warrior and Guardian Mentalities. Police instructors widely agreed that the warrior and guardian mentalities were not mutually exclusive, but rather both were essential and complimentary. A101 states “And some of

them instinctively have more warrior mentality and some of them instinctively have what I would consider a guardian mentality. And that's why I think there's... I absolutely think there's room for both in law enforcement". A103 opined "I don't think it should be mutually exclusive, right? But we want our police officers to be the Jack of all trades. Right? We want them to be able to deescalate, we want to be able to use the correct physical force, as quickly as possible and effectively as possible" and "I think you have a guardian mentality and then when it needs it, turn on that warrior mindset and do warrior things". A108 states "They can actually be combined. Well any... anybody, that... that is a well-rounded, proactive law enforcement officer, I believe it is both. I believe they would have to be both to be effective". A111 adds "Ideally, I think the best suited to serving our citizens, and you know our coworkers, and ourselves, are people that have learned to do both. And are prepared to do both". A116 states "I don't know how you can guard someone without wanting to fight for them'.

Situational Fluidity and Role-Based Adaptation. Participants consistently emphasized the necessity of being adaptable and being able to shift fluidly between mentalities and the situation dictates. A106 says "You may have to be all of that in one call". A108 noting the call ambiguity prior to arrival states "You never know what it's gonna be when you get there and you have to be able to change within those circumstances every time". A110 says "They can be different hats that you take on for different situations". A115 posits that that an officer can have both mentalities but adds "I think you're one more than the other. But you should have the ability to transition at the right time into the right thing".

Warrior Traits Without Empathy May Be Problematic. Several trainers noted that a dominate warrior mentality without balance can lead to negative outcomes, particularly various relationships. A105 talking about his warrior orientation “Compassion is not a huge strong point with me...I see that as a fault, probably more than a blessing”. A107 holds “I think that the warrior mentality, can in most times they will do the work of the guardian, not necessarily because they feel empathy but because that's the job and they know that's what they're supposed to do”. Talking about warrior mentality’s propensity for a lack of compassion and empathy for people A109 says “It’s more like, was a law broken? OK, you go to jail”. A112 adds “There are officers who are constantly in warrior mode, constantly kicking the bushes, kicking indoors, doing things, and they don't have time for the mentorship, they don't have time for the relationship building, they don't have time for that. Because that's not real police work”.

Guardian Orientation as Foundational but Insufficient Alone. Many of the police instructors stressed that while guardian traits are both crucial, officers must be willing and ready to transition to a mode where they can act decisively in response to threats. A103 in speaking of his children’s School Resource Officer “...loves them kids, but if anything were to happen, he would turn that warrior mindset on...”. A107 said you better have that warrior in certain circumstances “You're gonna need him up there because a lot of cases that guardians not gonna get it done”. A112 states “I would rather have warriors that I have to pull back than guardians that I have to push forward”. A114 using a sheepdog metaphor “We have to guard the innocent, like a sheep dog for the sheep, but we have to be capable of going after the wolves”.

Relation to Research Question

The participant responses to this question consistently emphasized that effective officers must embody characteristics of both the guardian and warrior mentalities and to be able to move fluidly between them based on situational dynamics. This adaptability is perceived to be an essential element for preventing excessive force while ensuring officer and public safety. In sum, the police instructors' perceptions are that the balanced coexistence of both mentalities serves as a critical moderating influence on use of force decision-making, shaping how force is applied and the appropriateness of an officer's response.

Question 12

Have you experienced a difference in officers displaying characteristics of either a guardian or warrior mentality based upon gender, shift assignment, or neighborhood characteristics?

Data Summary

This question is important because provides critical insight on how situational or demographic variables influence the expression of the warrior or guardian mentalities in real-world contexts. It allows the participants to reflect on lived experiences where these mentalities were not abstract constructs but situationally activated behavioral orientations. The police instructors recognize meaningful differences in how warrior and guardian mentalities were expressed based on an officer's environmental assignment, personal background, and to a lesser degree, gender. The dominate theme developed around environmental contexts and mentality development through upbringing and

personal history. While only one respondent suggested that female officers may struggle with the physical task of force readiness, it does illustrate how gender expectations may interact with role identity. Overall, the meaning participants assign to an officer's role within different settings reveals the dynamic interplay between environment stimulus and individual background in the shaping of use-of-force behaviors.

Emergent Themes

Assignment and Environment Shape Mentality. An officers' operational mentality, whether warrior or guardian, is influenced by the geographical and environmental contexts of their assignments. Police instructors consistently noted that officers assigned to high-crime, urbanized areas more likely demonstrated warrior mentality traits such as readiness, assertion, and aggression. In contrast, officers working in low-crime neighborhoods, suburban, or rural areas adopted more guardian-like characteristics such as restraint, approachability, and relational policing. A102 posits "If you're working in a rural community, you're going to be more "Hey, how ya doin?" guardian style. If you're in Oklahoma City where every time you go 10-8 you got 12 calls stacked and several with weapons involved [you'll be more warrior]". A114 agreed "Officers from a rural town are typically more laid back and have that guardian aspect nailed down. Officers from bigger cities have to bring that warrior mentality out". A103 said "You can't always predict by appearance, but often the call load and assignment shape how they respond". A112 suggests "Our guardian types are...detectives...school resource officers...and community engagement guys. Then the warriors, they're the guys on the S.W.A.T. Team, the Gang Unit, and the Warrant Unit".

Upbringing and Personal History as Influencing Factors. Many of the participants reflected on how an officer's developmental environments, such as family structure, work ethic instilled as youth, exposure to hardship or loss, played a significant role in shaping whether the officer leans toward the warrior or guardian mentality and associated behaviors. A103 holds "And what I've seen is usually the ones who've had a little bit harder upbringing had a hard family life and stuff, they're usually pretty... there's no quit in them, right? You can't make anything hard enough for them. No matter what you do, they're gonna put their head down and go to work" he added "I know an instructor, he's guarding his community, but if it's time to go hunt bad guys he'll go with the ferocity of a lion". He continued "You can't train that into him, he grew up with it". A104 notes "Not getting work ethic instilled...being sheltered from what the real world is. I think that causes a lot of hesitation". He also adds "I was raised independently; I had to do everything myself...I think it all boils down to they're raised and what they surround themselves with at home". A104 also adds "You could throw in a religious upbringing per se...I think it influences how they interact with people...it could dictate which side [mentality] they would be on".

Gender Perceptions and Physical Expectations. Gender-based assumptions, especially around physical strength, comfortability with weapons, and willingness to engage in forceful activities, may influence perception of warrior and guardian tendencies. A114 noted "Women typically don't gravitate to this job...they have trouble wrapping their head [around the violence]. Having to rack the slide on a gun, you know, scares some."

Relation to Research Question

Oklahoma police training professionals perceive the warrior and guardian mentalities as fluid, context-driven orientations that significantly shape officers use of force behaviors. Their insights suggest that officers' use of force behavior is not simply a product of training, but rather a dynamic composite of individual background, symbolic role interpretation, and operational environment.

Question 13

Based on your experience, how do the warrior and guardian mentalities influence whether or not police officers use force?

Data Summary

Participants detailed that the warrior and guardian mentalities influence an officers' use of force behaviors in distinct, yet interrelated ways, reflecting lived experiences that underscore the complexity of these roles in practical policing. The warrior mentality was consistently associated with decisiveness, assertiveness, and swift action manifesting in earlier and more confident use of force in dynamic or escalating encounters. In contrast, the guardian mentality was associated with restraint, enhanced communications, and a greater reliance on de-escalation techniques. Participants cautioned that both mentalities had potential negative aspects when used inappropriately. The warrior mentality was recognized for the potential of unnecessary escalation of force or use of force while instructors cautioned that officers with a guardian mentality may delay in taking necessary actions and thereby possibly placing officers or others at risk. A recurrent experiential insight across the interviews emphasized that use of force decisions

are not governed by mentality alone, or environment alone, but rather are strongly influenced by an officer's confidence, training, tactical ability, and interpersonal skills. Several instructors reiterated the necessity for officers to be able to transition between the warrior and guardian orientations depending on situational demands. This adaptive capability rooted in professional experience emerged as a critical element for appropriate use of force decisions.

Emergent Themes

Warrior Mentality Correlates with Faster, More Decisive Use of Force. The police trainer's responses maintained that officers with a warrior mentality were generally quicker to use force. This was frequently attributed to their assertiveness, decisiveness, and prioritization of gaining control in hostile situations. Experientially based, police instructors perceived these officers as having a more action-oriented mindset, leading them to resolve threats quickly while minimizing dangers to themselves or others. A salient point about officer's more aligned with the warrior mentality using force more quickly, is that their quicker use of force was not necessarily a bad thing, and not was it necessarily excessive. Many of the police trainers who spoke about this point noted that the officers with a warrior mentality, based on their training and experience, recognized the futility of continued negotiations, and acted sooner with lesser force to resolve the incident thereby promoting safety to all involved. A102 says "The warrior side is quicker to the utilization of force. Where he or she is ready to go hands on all the time". A106 also agrees "The warrior was usually quicker to go to force. Didn't have to debate long at all". A109 said "I think a warrior mentality would tend to make more use

of force. I think they would tend to use force more often. I... I've seen officers, with what I would think was a warrior mentality, very quick to use force". A112 states "The guys with the warrior mentality are typically more aggressive..."

Guardian Mentality Encourages De-Escalation and Delay in Use of Force.

Based on their experiences, the police trainers described officers who were more closely aligned with the guardian mentality as perceived to prioritize communication, de-escalation, and avoidance of physical confrontation. Several respondents expressed concerns that delaying action too long, when action should be taken, may create or exacerbate safety risks to officers and civilians. A102 said "Where the guardian style aspect, what I've seen here, is he or she would be more trying to talk it out, de-escalation, more than what I see the warrior try to. They would try to deescalate more where the warriors are like, 'oh let's just go!' I've done told you once, I'm not going to tell you again, let's get it done". A106 posits "The guardian would try to use other avenues... [the warrior] is like, 'Ok, you're not leaving me a choice, we're going to force". A107 makes the point "The ones I would put in the guardian category are a lot less likely to use force. And when they do, it's too little, too late". A108 also notes "That [guardian] officer would be more likely to let the situation maybe go too far unnecessarily because of their failure to act".

Skill, Confidence, and Knowledge Often Override Mentality in Use of Force.

Several instructors cautioned against attributing use of force decisions strictly to an officer's alignment with a guardian or warrior mentality. They emphasized the importance of an officer's training, skillsets, and confidence in their knowledge of law, caselaw, and

their physical abilities. The police instructors indicated that officers may delay using force, not because they're guardians, but because they have the expertise and skills to delay using force to explore other options first, while knowing they can still maintain control of the situation. A105 stated "I don't know that I would say a warrior will use force sooner. Because a warrior has trained themselves, and their ability is high enough, that they can wait until it's needed, or not a lot of... not other options. Because they've honed their skill and they're confident in their skill. I think that plays a huge role, as far as when you use force, and when you don't". A110 asserts "Those decisions get made faster, and more effectively, and correctly if you already know your policy and caselaw". A111 said "People will be quicker to use force if they're better at it...people who don't train will shy away from it". A115 adds "They have a certain level of confidence in themselves...they can slow it back down".

Relation to Research Question

Police training professionals generally perceive the warrior mentality as fostering a readiness to act decisively, often resulting in quicker use of force in volatile or escalating situations. This orientation is viewed as both a protective asset but also as a potential liability if not balanced with judgment and discipline. In contrast, instructors associate the guardian with caution, de-escalation, and prioritizing communication over force. Participant responses indicate that these attributes are beneficial for peacefully resolving incidents and mitigating excessive use of force. However, instructors also caution that officers who hesitate to use force or fail to assert control due to an over-reliance on guardian attributes may inadvertently increase safety risks to both officers and

citizens. Perhaps the most salient point is mentality alone does not determine use of force behavior alone. Rather, the police instructors emphasized that an officer's confidence, skill level, legal knowledge, and adaptive capabilities are critical moderators of use of force decisions and behaviors. This multidimensional framework, drawn from the lived experiences of the participants, reflects their belief that the responsible and effective use of force depends not solely on an officer's mentality, but on the officer's readiness and ability to interpret the situation and act within dynamic environments.

Question 14

Based on your experience, how does an officer's alignment with either the warrior and guardian mentalities influence or effect the degree (severity) of force used?

Data Summary

Question 13 assessed whether either mentality influenced an officer's decision to use force. This question specific evaluates whether one mentality or the other uses a greater or lesser level or severity of force in a specific situation. Collectively, based on the lived experiences of the police trainers, their responses indicate that the levels of force do differentiate between the guardian and warrior mentalities. However, the reasons they cited for the differentiation were multifaceted. Participants generally acknowledged that those aligning with a warrior mentality were likely to use force more quickly and were more willing to escalate to higher levels of force. In contrast, those aligning with the guardian mentality were more deliberate in the manner in which they used force and were generally slower to use force even when justified or necessary. Some of the instructors opined that officers with a guardian mentality may use more force than those with a

warrior mentally under certain conditions. One condition noted was when the guardian-type officer waits too long to use justifiable force, and the situation escalates to a level where the officer needs to use a much higher level of force to regain control over the situation. The second circumstance is when the guardian type is not skilled or confident with their hand-to-hand defensive tactics skills. In this case, officers may resort to a higher level of force either from fear or from a lack of skill. The police trainers cautioned against rigid categorizations of guardian or warrior mentality noting that individual characteristics and situational variables can override mental alignment in use of force decision-making. In totality, their responses underscore that while the warrior and guardian frameworks provide a useful conceptual lens, the use of force decision-making and subsequent application of force, is a complex dynamic shaped by additional determinant factors in combination such as preparedness, judgment, and context.

Emergent Themes

Warrior Mentality Often Leads to Quicker Escalation of Force. Many of the police instructors emphasized that officers aligned with the warrior mentality tend to escalate to physical force or higher levels of force than those aligned with the guardian mentality. The instructors believe factors such as control, confidence, decisiveness, aggression, personal skills, and the ability to better understand the dynamics of the situation may all be contributing factors. A102 said “Where the warrior got there quicker and faster and didn’t waste no time’. A103 agreed “They [those with a warrior mentality] would...would take that to a higher level of force, and back, a little bit faster than guardians”. He added “The warrior would pick it up a little quicker than the guardian”.

A109 says “I think someone of a warrior mentality definitely has more potential to go above and beyond”. Speaking about deadly force A114 notes “Yes... someone who is... are kind of in the warrior... have the warrior mentality and understand, is probably in my opinion, more apt to transition directly to a lethal force when needed”. A110 disagrees with some of the trainers stating “A warrior should be confident in their combative skills, and their weapon skills, right. Up on their caselaw, like a master of their craft, right, in taking action, defending people, defending themselves. They should use less force because of their confidence in what they can do...”. A106 notes “I think it is about the same...just this one got there quicker”.

Guardian Mentality May Delay Necessary Force Leading to Ineffectiveness.

Some respondents observed that officers with a strong guardian orientation may hesitate or delay in applying appropriate force, which can lead to a tactical disadvantage and potentially lead to increased risks for officers and citizens. A107 asserts “The guardian mentality... they will use force...too little, too late...and then try to play catch up”. He adds “The guardian mentality...they’ll resort to force too late”. A110 states “...they're at a lower level of activation, they're going to freak out. So, if we take that the guardian person that we're thinking of, I can actually see them using more force because of that”. A112 says “The guardian will slow this way down, we’ll be talking for an hour before they decide to tase him”.

Confidence in Training Moderates the Use of Force Regardless of Mentality.

A couple instructors emphasized that an officer’s proficiency in defensive tactics, their legal knowledge, and experience significantly influence how and when they use force.

These instructors believe that those officer attributes may be more influential on use of force decision-making than the officer's alignment with the warrior or guardian mentalities. A111 stated "That's where training comes in, on the level of force side...". He also adds "So the better trained and this, you know, it doesn't matter if you have if you're a guardian or a warrior, that's like based knowledge stuff that you must have to make these decisions. And making informed decisions on use of force I think is the deciding factor on that". A116 also states "I'd say on that, level of experience, how...how they are at managing stress, that's probably the biggest one" and "If you got everything squared away, if you're nice and fit, your firearms are dialed in, all that stuff, you're going to have less stuff to stress out about".

Emotional Regulation and Preparedness as Determinants of Force Severity.

Several of the police trainers highlighted the influence of mental discipline, emotional control, and situational readiness and critical to making appropriate use of force decisions and legal applications of force. Failure to regulate emotions may result in overcompensation, retaliation, and other improper uses of force. A108 notes "And the biggest thing against us, is we're all human. We have to be able to control our emotions. That's the biggest key. Because nothing out here is personal. And I know that's hard to say because it's really hard not to take a lot of things in this profession personal. But it's not".

Relation to Research Question

Based on their experiences, the police trainers' responses indicate that both the warrior and guardian mentalities significantly influence officers' use of force decisions

and the manner in which force is applied. Participants consistently emphasized that either the warrior or guardian mentalities can serve as a valuable asset when applied in a judicious and balanced way. Conversely, both mentalities can have detrimental consequences when not tempered by effective communication, situational awareness, and the appropriate application of force. Throughout their responses, police training professionals repeatedly stressed that factors such as training quality, officer confidence, emotional regulation, and stress management play a critical moderating role in shaping how the warrior or guardian mentalities manifest in practice. It is the perceptions of the participants that mentality alone does not dictate use of force decision making and application; rather, it is a complex interplay of mentality, preparedness, experience, and situational judgment strongly determines officers' use of force decisions and force applications.

Evaluation of Findings: Overarching Themes

Behavior Adaptability is Central to Responsible Use of Force

Participants consistently emphasized that use of force decision-making and use of force behaviors are not dictated solely through an officers' alignment with the warrior or guardian mentality but by the capacity to fluidly adapt their roles based situational needs and emotionally controlled responses to real-time stimuli. Officers who can utilize situational awareness to transition between tactical assertiveness and relational engagement, managing stress, fear, and ego, are perceived as being better able to make better decisions and apply force more appropriately. This theme reflects tenets of

symbolic interaction theory in that officers interpret situations and enact roles based on internal meaning shaped by social interactions and emotional self-awareness.

Officer Identity Shapes Interpretation and Action

Officers internalized alignment with roles, whether protector, enforcer, peacekeeper, warrior, or guardian, frames how they interpret encounters and respond to perceived threats. These identities serve as cognitive scripts guiding behavioral choices in complex, dynamic, or ambiguous situations. This theme helps to demonstrate this dynamic by indicating that police officer's self-identification is formed through meaning-making via social interactions, which in turn directly influences officer decision-making and behavior.

Training Institutions Socialize Mentality and Behavior

The police instructors frequently noted that training environments such as the police academy, the modeled behaviors and philosophies of the instructors, shape how new officers come to see themselves and their roles. Whether training encourages tactical aggression or emotional regulation has lasting implications on the officers' decision-making paradigm and their ability to use force constructively. This indicates that what instructors demonstrate later serves as symbolic reference for behavioral norms. This also reinforces the idea that behavior not only cognitively enacted but is also socially enacted and modeled through the shared interactions.

Guardian Mentality Moderates Force Through Relational Policing

Participants had a strong consensus that officers more aligned with the guardian mentality attributes were better at building trust, communicating effectively, and de-

escalating situations than those officers who aligned with the warrior mentality. Their approach is not a passive one but rather is proactive with the goals of improved community relationships, preserving safety, minimizing harms, and using force as a last resort. This theme highlights the interpretative nature of officer-citizen encounters, where meaning, emotion, and symbolic roles interact to influence behavior.

Warrior and Guardian Mentalities as Situationally Activated Roles

This theme reflects the participants' shared belief that the warrior and guardian mentalities are not fixed orientations but rather are dynamic roles, consciously or subconsciously, activated in response to situational demands. Officers must assess each encounter, its level of risk, community context, legal constraints or tolerances, and behavioral cues, to determine whether a more assertive or a more relational posture is warranted. Police trainers consistently emphasized the importance of role flexibility, describing it as a necessary professional skill, central to safe and appropriate applications of force. This theme aligns with the study's theoretical framework, Symbolic Interaction Theory, as it frames the warrior and guardian mentalities as interpretive constructs shaped by social context and internalized meaning-making rather than a rigid role. Moreover, the participants indicated that an officers' role flexibility, situational awareness, and ability to adopt the correct mentality in a given context is central to appropriate use of force decision making.

Emotional Intelligence and Interpretive Moderator

Police instructors noted emotional intelligence, conceptually, as a decisive influence on use of force behavior. This reflects a deeper symbolic process, modulated by

an officers' capacity for emotional regulation, reflective judgement, and interpersonal competence as core mediators of behavioral outcomes. Participants consistently stress that even when a warrior or guardian orientation is present, it is the officers' ability to manage internal emotional states that influences whether force is applied and in what manner. Emotional intelligence operates as an interpretive filter, a symbolic process through which officers assess both their internal cognitive and emotional cues and the meaning of external cues in their working environment. This theme connects interpersonal awareness to social interactions and decision making, offering an important connection mentality, decision-making, and behavior.

Summary

The six overarching themes developed through this comprehensive phenomenological study demonstrate that Oklahoma police training professionals view the influence of the warrior and guardian mentalities on use of force behavior as fluid, situational, subject to internal moderation, and socially constructed. Rather than endorsing one mentality over the other, participants consistently emphasized the fundamental need for officers to possess both orientations and the capacity to apply them selectively based on situational context, emotional regulation, and interpretive judgment.

In summary, participants clearly indicated the ability to shift between warrior and guardian roles based on situational dynamics is a professional skill essential for proper use of force application. Adaptability, not a fixed orientation, is the key moderating factor. Training professionals also highlighted that how officers perceive their role fundamentally shapes how they interpret situations and the behavioral strategies they

employ, especially regarding the use of force. Participants also noted that academy culture, instructor modeling, and organizational philosophy were also formative factors in whether officers develop a balanced, emotionally intelligent approach to use of force, or if they defaulted to rigid, control-oriented behaviors. Not surprisingly, the guardian mentality was described as favoring empathy, communication, community connection, and less reliance on force. When properly enacted, it was seen as effective in gaining voluntary compliance and promoting legitimacy. Also not surprising, the warrior mentality was seen as more assertive, control-oriented, and most effective in high-risk or dangerous situations. However, the police instructors rejected the notion of the warrior and guardian mentalities as static identities. Instead, they advocated that the warrior and guardian roles should be considered tools to be strategically employed based on evolving situational variables. Based on their professional experiences, police training professionals emphasized that the most effective officers were those who could fluidly activate the appropriate role for the circumstance. Finally, the ability to self-regulate emotionally was seen as an essential interpretive function that governs whether officers can accurately assess threats, maintain control under pressure, and avoid unnecessary escalation.

Collectively, these themes illustrate that the warrior and guardian mentalities are not inherently good nor bad but are best understood as symbolic frameworks that officers enact in reaction to internal and external cues given in a specific context. The influence of the warrior and guardian mentalities influence on use of force behavior is mediated by identity, emotion, training, socialization, and situational meaning-making. These findings

align with symbolic interaction theory, which frames behavior as a product of internalized meanings constructed through social interaction. In this study, those internalized meanings are developed through training, modeling, role identity, emotional awareness, and other factors which subsequently influence how, when, why, and to what degree force is applied.

This chapter has provided a comprehensive analysis of the lived experiences and perceptions of Oklahoma police training professionals concerning the influence of the warrior and guardian mentalities on police use of force behavior. Through a rigorous thematic analysis grounded in symbolic interaction theory, six over-arching themes were developed that elucidate the relationship and interaction between officer identity, training, situational interpretation, and behavioral adaptation. These findings offer critical insight into how these cognitive frameworks, combined with personal competencies and perceptions of self-efficacy, shape officer decision-making in real-world contexts. The following chapter will expand upon these insights by interpreting their significance in relation to existing literature, addressing the study's limitations, insight for future research, and offering practical recommendations for training and policy development. Finally, this chapter will examine the potential implications of this study's findings for promoting positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to develop a deeper, richer understanding of police training professional's perceptions of the warrior and guardian mentalities in law enforcement and the potential influence that these mentalities may have on police use of force behavior. This study is important due to the seriousness of how police use of force impacts the relationship between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Despite changes in policy, training, and culture, perceptions of inappropriate or excessive use of force by the police continue to intensify the discordant tensions between law enforcement and marginalized communities (Wendel et al., 2022). These tensions are further exacerbated by the historical problems between marginalized communities and local law enforcement making it difficult to understate the importance of continued research about the nature and influence of variables contributing to the use of force by police. This undercurrent of distrust and suspicion displaces the mutual aid and cooperation necessary to reduce crime and to improve public safety.

Moreover, several authors postulated that police officers are being trained to adopt a warrior mentality promoting an "us versus them" attitude culminating in a propensity to use more force than may be required or justified. Furthermore, many of these authors stated that the warrior mentality is often instilled in recruits during their law enforcement training academy (e.g., Hallinan, 2016; Rahr & Rice, 2015; Stoughton, 2015; Stoughton, 2014). Other recent studies have indicated that police recruits embracing a guardian mentality had positive attitudes toward de-escalation and restraint

in the use of force (see Gantner & Trinkner, 2024; Shuck, 2023). My research provides additional academic study to help assess the accuracy and validity of these propositions.

I conducted a qualitative study using a phenomenological approach. A phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study as it sought to understand meanings, characterizations, and interpretations of a phenomenon through the perceptions and lived experiences of others (see Saldana, 2016; Zikmund, 2003). Additionally, I endeavored to better understand the participants subjective perceptions and meanings within a specific social context (see Fossey et al., 2002; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I focused on police training personnel's subjective perceptions of the warrior and guardian mentalities and how these mentalities may influence officer's use of force decisions and behaviors based on their lived experiences, within the social context of policing and police use of force. I used in-depth interviews to gather data on the subjective experiences of police training personnel to develop a richer understanding of the defining attributes, functions, and influence of the warrior and guardian mentalities on police use of force behavior.

My results revealed six overarching themes that collectively demonstrate that Oklahoma police training professional view the influence of the warrior and guardian mentalities on use of force behavior as fluid, situational, and socially constructed. Rather than endorsing one orientation over the other, participants emphasized the importance of officers developing both mentalities and that the adaptive capacity to deploy them based on situational demands, emotional regulation, and interpretive judgment.

Moreover, participants described this role fluidity as a critical professional competency, highlighting that use of force decisions are shaped more by situational assessment, adaptability, and emotional intelligence than by fixed role identity. Officer role perception, academy culture, instructor modeling, and organizational philosophy were also identified as key influences in shaping whether officers adopt a balanced approach or default to rigid, control-oriented responses. The guardian mentality was associated with greater empathy, communication use, and de-escalation, while the warrior mentality was viewed as necessary in high-risk scenarios. Moreover, these mentalities were not seen as static or fixed traits, but rather as strategic roles to be selectively employed. Participants consistently emphasized that the warrior and guardian mentalities were neither fixed, nor mutually exclusive, but instead function as situationally activated frameworks that guide officers' interpretive processes and behavioral responses.

These findings align with symbolic interaction theory, illustrating how internalized meanings formed through training, socialization, and role identity, mediate officers' situational interpretations and behavioral responses. Participants identified the most effective officers as those who can fluidly transition between roles, guided by situational and contextual awareness, emotional control, and interpretive insight, within evolving situations. These insights help to affirm that use of force behavior is not simply a product of a static identity, such as a guardian or warrior, but emerges from a dynamic interplay of symbolic meaning, context, situational cues, and interpretive actions.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings of this study corroborate several established conclusions in the extant literature while introducing new dimensions to the understanding of police role orientation, specifically the warrior and guardian mentalities, and use of force behavior. Specifically, the data support prior research concerning the influence of role perception, academy culture and instructor modeling, and professional identity development, while also reinforcing certain characteristics associated with the guardian and warrior mentalities.

Confirming Findings

Interview data collected from the participants revealed that an officer's perception of their role is foundational in shaping how they interpret situations and determine the behavioral strategies they employ. This assertion is consistent with research on cognitive heuristics and mental schemas as mechanisms through which officers make situational assessment and decisions (see Bonner, 2025; Mears et al., 2017). Additionally, these findings align with studies indicating that role perception significantly affects officers' situational awareness, attention focus, interpretive judgment, how they interpret interactions with citizens, and their corresponding behaviors (see Di Nota et al., 2023; Van Der Meer et al., 2023).

Participants also emphasized that academy culture, instructor modeling, and broader organizational influences play a formative role in shaping cadets' understanding of their professional responsibilities and public interactions. This aligns with prior scholarship suggesting that both formal academy training and occupational socialization

significantly influence officers' developing perceptions of their role (see Ingram et al., 2018; Paoline III & Gau, 2017; Rahr & Rice, 2015). These findings are particularly relevant considering studies demonstrating that role development informs how officers interpret situational cues, assign value to stimuli, and develop behavioral restraint – factors that collectively shape officers' decision making (see Breckler, 1984; Donner & Maskaly, 2025; Zanna, 1994). The present findings are also consistent with work by Stoughton (2016) and Hossain (2024), who highlighted the impact of both formal and informal elements of academy training on the development of recruits' professional identities.

Furthermore, the results of this study affirm several behavioral characteristics commonly associated with the guardian and warrior mentalities. Officers identified as possessing a guardian orientation, or displaying favorable attitudes toward it, were consistently described as exhibiting empathy, compassion, communication skills, relationship-building behavior, de-escalation strategies, and restraint. These findings support prior research affirming the centrality of these traits to the guardian mentality (see McLean et al., 2024; Rahr & Rice, 2015; Schuck, 2023; Stoughton, 2016).

Additionally, many of the participants reported the guardian mentality was better suited to most daily policing duties.

Similarly, certain traits typically linked to the warrior mentality were also affirmed. Officers perceived as identifying with the warrior mentality were frequently described as more assertive, control-oriented, and more inclined to support the use of force in response to perceived threats or noncompliance (Hurst & Franko, 2024; McLean

et al., 2023; McLean et al., 2024; Murphy & McCarthy, 2024; Stoughton, 2016). Notably however, the participants in this study expressed a more favorable view of the warrior mentality in specific contexts than has been observed in prior research. This divergence is further explored in subsequent sections.

Finally, this study affirms previous research that the warrior and guardian mentalities are neither static nor are they mutually exclusive role orientations. The participants in this study consistently emphasized that both mentalities need to be present within an effective officer. Moreover, they stressed that an officer's ability to fluidly transition between the mentalities was a crucial skill set necessary to maximize the benefits of each role orientation within dynamic situations. This finding aligns with McLean et al., (2020) who demonstrated that both the warrior and guardian mentalities represent distinct, measurable constructs that can coexist within individual officers. McLean and colleagues suggested while officers may have a more predominate alignment with one mentality or the other, most officers showed evidence of transitioning between the two mentalities. Similarly, Donner and Maskaly (2025) found characteristics of both the warrior and guardian mentalities were present in police recruits and that each mentality had a significant influence on the officer's attitudes toward use of force.

Contradictory Findings

Some findings in this study contest other prior research. Participants consistently emphasized the importance of officers being able to transition between the warrior and guardian mentalities. Specifically, participants indicated that in nonviolent situations or routine service calls, the guardian mentality was the more appropriate and effective

framework. However, they also noted that if a guardian-oriented officer continued to rely on communication for too long as a situation escalated, they risked losing control and potentially needing to apply a higher level of force to reestablish control. Ideally, participants stated officers must recognize when a situation is escalating and transition to a warrior mentality early enough to apply the minimum necessary level of force to maintain control and safety.

The emphasis on fluidity between mentalities stands in contrast to other studies that characterize the warrior and guardian mindsets as mutually exclusive and enduring orientations. Some research has suggested that officers who have adopted, or have been taught to embrace, a warrior mentality may develop an “us versus them” outlook, may begin to see civilians as adversaries or as obstacles, and ultimately internalize the warrior mentality as a fixed component of their enduring professional identity (Rahr & Rice, 2015; Stoughton, 2015). Similarly, Murphy and McCarty (2025) argued that the warrior and guardian mentalities are not role adoptions but are relatively stable orientations shaped by training and organizational culture. Henry and Wolfe (2024) further supported this view, finding that these orientations are generally invariant across officer demographics, suggesting that the warrior and guardian mentalities function as stable, rather than transient, professional orientations.

The participants in this study also challenged the presumption that the guardian mentality is the superior orientation that represents the best practice for contemporary policing (McLean et al., 2023). While the participants acknowledge that the guardian mentality may be more appropriate in some situations, the police instructors were quick

to emphasize that it was less effective than the warrior mentality in high-risk, aggressive, dangerous, or rapidly evolving situations.

This study also contrasts with other research that assumes that the warrior mentality is correlated with greater levels of force and potentially the use of excessive force (McLean et al., 2023; Stoughton, 2015; Stoughton, 2016). Numerous studies that have found correlations between the warrior mentality and attitudes favorable to the use of force, perceptions of aggression, adversarial, and willingness to justify excessive use of force (Hurst & Franko, 2024; McLean et al., 2023; Murphy & McCarty, 2024; Stoughton, 2016;). However, I identified no scholarly study to date that directly correlates the warrior mentality with the actual use of higher levels of force or excessive force.

Participants offered several other factors that contributed to higher levels of force, or excessive use of force, that they perceived as attributed to the warrior mentality, but which, in their lived experienced, were not inherently linked with it. These findings are discussed further in a subsequent section. Participants repeatedly cautioned that guardian-oriented officers who failed to assert control during escalating situations were more likely to resort to higher levels of force than would have been necessary had they intervened sooner.

In contrast, participants reported that officers perceived to hold a warrior-orientation were more likely to use force sooner than their guardian-oriented counterparts. However, this behavior was not framed as aggressive or excessive, but rather as a calculated decision to act decisively while the use of a lower levels of force

were still viable or safer options. Police instructors emphasized that employing minimal force early in a deteriorating situation is preferable, and safer for all involved, than waiting until the situation demands more aggressive interventions. They further observed that officers operating from a warrior mentality orientation were often more adept at recognizing the need for timely intervention and implementing lower levels of force before a situation escalates out of control.

Advances Scholarly Understanding

This research contributes to the existing body of literature in several key ways. Drawing on data obtained from police training professionals; the findings suggest that both the warrior and guardian mentalities function as essential cognitive frameworks that police officers must possess to navigate the complexities of a dynamic policing environment. According to participants, effective officers integrate aspects of both mentalities to assess situational dynamics and guide their behavioral responses accordingly. Additionally, each mentality serves as a context-specific problem-solving orientation, with distinct environments where its application is most appropriate. Conversely, when behavioral responses associated with either mentality are employed in situation where they are ill-suited or an inappropriate response, the likelihood of negative or detrimental outcomes increases.

Second, participants consistently emphasized that effective officers must possess the ability to self-regulate their emotions, recognize the emotional states of others, accurately interpret changing situational dynamics, and to fluidly transition between the warrior and guardian mentalities as context demands. Among these competencies, the

ability to shift between the mentalities in a timely and appropriate manner was particularly stressed. These attributes align closely with the core components of emotional intelligence (EQ).

This finding suggests that police officers should not only exhibit high EQ, but also receive formal training in its principles and applications. EQ is broadly defined as the capacity to understand and manage one's own emotions, recognize and interpret the emotions of others, and to use this awareness to guide thinking, and behavior in interpersonal interactions (Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1993; Salovey et al., 2001). As noted by Landry (2019), EQ is a critical leadership competency and strongly associated with enhanced performance. Individuals with high EQ are more likely to remain composed under pressure, resolve conflict effectively, and foster better professional relationships with others.

A third contribution this study makes to the existing literature on police use of force is the identification of officer confidence, particularly in their training and skills, as a key influence in use of force decision making. One participant with over 25 years of experience emphasized that there is nothing worse than a fearful officer, highlighting the critical role of self-assurance in high-risk encounters. This study's findings reinforce the importance not only of providing quality training but also of ensuring that such training is structured and reinforced in a way that cultivates officers' confidence in applying it effectively. While prior research has extensively examined the value of training, these findings suggest that a lack of confidence, stemming from insufficient or ineffective

training, may be contributory to unnecessary or inappropriate uses of force. This aspect of training is examined more closely in the later section discussing implications.

This study further advances the current body of research by highlighting a notable divergence in how the warrior mentality is conceptualized by police training professional when compared to civilians. One key distinction is that the term “warrior mentality” appears to be more commonly used in academic literature and social media discourse than in law enforcement training contexts. Participants in this study were more familiar with the concept of a “warrior mindset”, which they describe as a situationally activated survival strategy taught to officers for navigating high-risk or life-threatening encounters. The portrayal of the warrior mentality as an overarching worldview or fixed identity did not resonate with the participants. Moreover, the study revealed discrepancies between the way police trainers and civilians characterize warrior-oriented officers. For instance, civilian participants in Thibodeau et al. (2016) described such officers as “aggressive”, “fight”, and “strong” in a negative affect, while McLean et al. (2018) referred to them as soldiers locked in a battle between good and evil. In contrast, participants in this study used descriptors such as “courageous”, “vigilant”, “willing to sacrifice”, “honorable”, and “prepared” emphasizing protective rather than combative qualities. Although both groups included “aggressive” in their descriptions, most of the terms used by police instructors align more closely with general traits of professional policing. Importantly, several instructors clarified that officers who engage in excessive force should not be categorized as warriors, but rather as poorly trained, unfit for service, or exhibiting bullying behavior. These divergent perceptions may have significant implications for research,

policymaking, and public discourse, and they may contribute to misunderstandings and tension between civilians and law enforcement personnel.

Limitations of the Study

While this study offers valuable insight into the lived experienced and perceptions of Oklahoma police training professionals regarding the influence of the guardian and warrior mentalities on police use of force behavior, several limitations must be acknowledged. These limitations are those consistent with qualitative research designs, particularly phenomenological inquiry. One of the most salient limitations is the restricted generalizability of the findings. Phenomenological research is inherently focused on developing a deep, contextual understanding of a specific phenomenon as experienced by a defined group. While this design is well suited to the objective of this study, it limits the ability to generalize the findings beyond the study group.

Additionally, as a phenomenological study grounded in symbolic interaction theory, the finding may be more interpretive rather than predictive. This may limit the extent to which the findings can applied to broader populations. Another limitation involves the geographic scope of this research. The sample was drawn exclusively from training professionals within the state of Oklahoma. As such, the findings may not reflect the perspectives of police trainers in other jurisdictions where political environments, cultural norms or values, and organizational philosophies may differ.

Finally, the potential for researcher bias is an inherent concern in qualitative study. My professional background in law enforcement, while offering valuable contextual insight and facilitating rapport with participants, also presents the possibility

of interpretive bias. To mitigate this risk, reflexive practices were employed throughout the data collection and analysis phases. Ongoing self-reflection and methodological transparency were maintained to enhance credibility and trustworthiness of the study's findings.

Recommendations

This study revealed several factors related to the influence of the warrior and guardian mentalities on police use of force behavior that deserve further investigation. First, an early limitation of this study was its geographic restriction to Oklahoma. Replicating this study in other regions could enhance our understanding of these dynamics across diverse contexts, its' applicability across regions or jurisdictions, and contribute to broader transferability and credibility.

Two additional areas emerged as promising opportunities for future research. Participants consistently emphasized the importance officers being able to fluidly shift between warrior and guardian mentalities based on situational cues. Effective officers were described as those who could accurately interpret situational dynamics, understand the emotions of others, regulate their own emotions. These variables align with the core components of emotional intelligence (EQ). Future study could explore the impact or influence of EQ on officer performance, decision-making, risk management, and use of force outcomes. Another potential area for inquiry involves officer confidence as a contributing factor in use of force decisions. Future study could help conceptualize various dimensions of officer confidence and examine its' correlation with use of force behavior.

Finally, although this study did not directly address the relationship between the warrior mentality and actual use of force, it did help to identify a notable gap in the literature. While existing studies have examined warrior-oriented attitudes toward the acceptance of using force and procedural justice, few or none, have empirically demonstrated that officers with a warrior mentality actually use force more frequently, at higher levels, or more excessively than other officers. Additional research is needed to evaluate the validity of these assumptions and to determine whether warrior-oriented characteristics causally influence use of force decisions or outcomes.

Implications

General Study Implications

This research and its thematic analysis have yielded several implications that theoretical understanding, support positive social change, and inform policy and training development. A significant finding is that lived experiences of the police instructors suggest the warrior and guardian mentalities are neither static nor mutually exclusive constructs. Rather, they are flexible, situationally activated roles employed in response to situational cues. This finding implies that these orientations may be better understood as dynamic, context-driven roles, and core competencies essential for effective policing. It underscores that officer adaptability, rather than rigid role identification, is fundamental to sound judgement and proper use of force.

This study further offers a more nuanced understanding of the warrior and guardian mentalities, emphasizing how role orientation influences police use of force decision-making and behaviors. It has provided experiential insight that the warrior

mentality is not inherently problematic, not is the guardian mentality universally the ideal. Instead, each mentality is contextually appropriate depending upon situational demands. Recognizing this complexity may foster more evidence-based academic and public discourse countering narratives rooted in speculation or cultural presumption.

A critical implication from this study lies in the consistent emphasis participants placed on self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and behavioral controls. These characteristics align with core precepts of EQ and suggest that EQ serves as a critical moderating factor in shaping officer behavior. This finding suggests that incorporating emotional intelligence training into academy curricula and professional continuing education may enhance communication, reduce reactionary aggression, or decrease the likelihood of unnecessary conflict escalation.

Additionally, this study corroborates previous research that indicates that early police academy experiences are formative in a cadet's early role identification (Hossain, 2024; Hundersmark, 2009). Participants described how academy training, instructor modeling, and institutional influences substantially contribute to the development of new officer's professional identity and role internalization. While supporting existing research, this study adds depth by revealing how these academy experiences may reinforce, balance, distort, or mitigate warrior or guardian role orientation and internalization. This finding may prompt greater scholarly and professional attention to how organizational subcultures shape moral reasoning, behavioral scripting, and role alignment in the early days of an officer's career.

Finally, participants echoed current literature highlighting the importance of training in preparing law enforcement officers for professional and effective policing. However, participants indicated that officers lacking confidence in their training and skills, particularly in defensive tactics, communication, decision-making under pressure, are more likely to experiencing fear in volatile situations and subsequently may default to the use of force prematurely, unnecessarily, or excessively. This information has vitally important implications for law enforcement training and leadership.

Theoretical Implications

Symbolic interaction theory (S.I.T.) posits that meanings are constructed through social interactions and the individuals act based on the meanings those symbols hold for them. Additionally, S.I.T. maintains that these meanings arise from social interactions and communications and are continuously interpreted and modified through internal cognitive processes (Blumer, 1969). Applying this theoretical framework facilitates a deeper understanding of officer behavior by shifting away from a “bad apple” paradigm toward a more nuanced examination of meaning-making, role identity, and perceptual development. Participant responses align with the tenets of S.I.T. by demonstrating how officers construct, interpret, adapt meaning through interaction. These findings suggests that role identities, such as the warrior and guardian mentalities are emergent, socially reinforced, and situationally defined. This yields several theoretical implications. First, officer role identity is dynamic is modified through interactions with instructors, peers, and the public. Next, police academies and field training officer programs serve as locations of symbolic transmission where meanings such as role identifications, threats,

authority, and professionalism are communicated. Symbolic language, embedded in the training environment, such as the “warrior mindset”, or “guardian mentality”, or “suspect” contribute to cognitive schemas that officers develop and draw upon to guide behavior. Finally, an officer’s capacity to interpret context and modify behavior in response to situational cues, a central tenet of S.I.T., emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence, discretionary judgment, and situational awareness in modern policing.

Implications for Positive Social Change

Understanding police use of force and the variables that contribute to it is essential for improving community relationships and fostering positive social change. Research has consistently shown that perceptions of police legitimacy are closely linked to the public experiences, observations, and media portrayals of police use of force incidents (Motley & Joe, 2023; Strom & Wire, 2024; Tyler & Jackson, 2014). This study highlights the complex interplay between an officer’s role orientation, emotional regulation, ability to interpret contextual cues and situational dynamics in use of force decision making and subsequent behavior. Applying these insights to inform training and policy making can lead to more ethical, measured responses to promote safety for both officers and the communities they serve.

Furthermore, integrating the study’s findings into training protocols and institutional policies, particularly those emphasizing necessity, accountability, service, empathy, can collectively help develop officers who are more reflective and adaptive in dynamic situations. These implications drawn from the participant’s responses suggest

that meaningful reform must extend beyond surface level training adjustments. Rather, it requires a more comprehensive re-evaluation of officer identity formation, institutional culture, socialization and modeling practices, and the psychological, and symbolic aspects of policing.

One salient implication is the need to prioritize EQ and self-regulation as core competencies in officer development. Enhancing these skills can mitigate fear-driven or reactionary responses, promote greater empathy and professionalism, improve officers' ability to modulate behavior under stress, all of which contribute to reducing the likelihood of unnecessary force and strengthening public trust.

Collectively, these implications suggest that fostering positive social change in policing requires not only technical adjustments to policy and procedures, but also a more thoughtful, holistic reassessment of how officers are trained, socialized, and supported through their careers. Addressing these foundational elements can foster a more balanced, effective, and socially responsible approach to use of force decision making and behaviors across the police profession.

Recommendations for Practice

This study analyzed the influence of the warrior and guardian mentalities on police use of force based on data gathered from police training professionals and their lived experiences. The implications derived from the data provide a rich, in-depth, and nuanced understanding of the two orientations and how they operate in modern policing, how they are developed, and their impact on situational assessment and behavioral responses. This research bridges theoretical constructs and applied practice contributing

to academic understanding of police identity development and behavioral decision-making. Simultaneously, it offers evidence-based insights that law enforcement agencies can use to enhance training, develop policy, and promote professional conduct. The findings encourage reflection, discourse, additional research, and practical application suggesting several possible recommendations for practice.

Police Academy Training

As supported by this, and previous research, the cadet experience within the police academy, and particularly through instructor modeling, are significant factors in shaping role identification and behavioral orientation. Based on the findings of this study and the perspectives of the police instructors the following recommendations are provided to promote a more adaptive, emotionally intelligent, and community-entered approach to policing.

- *Implement specific, structured dual-role training that emphasizes role fluidity.*

Many participants emphasized the necessity of teaching the warrior mentality, especially for new recruits who may never have been exposed to violence prior to coming to the police academy. The intensity of this training varied by discipline with firearms and defensive tactics instructors placing greater emphasis on the warrior mindset due to the life-threatening situations they address. The instructors were teaching. However, the police instructors consistently underscored the importance to being able to fluidly shift between the warrior and guardian roles based on situational cues. One concern was the lack of clarity regarding where and how guardian characteristics were being taught. To address this, academy

training could be revised to explicitly include instruction design and implement training that addresses guardian characteristics to balance the warrior orientations already being taught. Moreover, cadets should be taught how to assess situational cues to adapt their role orientation as situational dynamics change.

- *Academies should expand scenario-based training with ranges of potential responses, with evaluative and reflective component.* The scenario-based training should expand to include more context-driven ethical reasoning, emotional regulation, and judgment under stress. Instructors should evaluate not only cadets' decisions but also the rationale behind those decisions as the scenario evolves. Following each scenario, students should engage in reflective briefings which allow them to assess their emotional responses, reasoning processes, and overall performance.
- *Integrate emotional intelligence instruction into the academy core curriculum.* EI is broadly defined as the capacity to recognize, understand, manage, and regulate one's own emotions while also perceiving and appropriately responding to the emotions of others (Mayer et al., 2004). The police training professionals in this study consistently emphasized the necessity of officers developing internal mechanisms for emotional regulation, self-monitoring, and behavioral modulation based on situational cues. These findings align with broader scholarship that supports the integration of EQ training in policing. Research indicates that higher EQ is associated with better stress management, improved interpersonal relationships, fewer use of force incidents, improved decision-making, and fewer

citizen complaints (Blumberg et al., 2019; Ramchunder & Martins, 2014). By embedding EQ instruction in academy curriculum, agencies can foster new officers who are not only tactically proficient, but with the self-awareness and psychological flexibility necessary for responsible policing in a complex, often emotionally charged, environment. This can facilitate developing emotionally intelligent officers who can moderate their behavior better, interpret social cues accurately, and apply force more judiciously and appropriately.

- *Select trainers who model role balance and professional conduct.* In addition to subject matter expertise, academy instructors should for their ability to model professional behaviors consistent with organizational values. Participants stressed the importance that instructor modeling plays in how cadets internalize their professional identities and role flexibility. Accordingly, academy leadership should audit instructor modeling, classroom conduct, and attitudes to ensure they alignment with academy training goals.
- *Incorporate fear management and confidence building into academy training modules.* Participants reported that fearful officers, or officers who lack confidence in their skills, are more likely to rely on higher levels of force to maintain control in stressful situations. Academy curricula should include training on the physiological responses to fear, fear-induced behaviors, and strategies for building self-efficacy. Addressing this issue early may prevent compensatory overreliance on force later. Stress inoculation techniques, which expose cadets to increasing levels of stress under controlled conditions, and behavioral health

training on stress recognition and resilience can be integrated into both classroom instructions and scenario-based training to provide recruits with tools for managing fear and stress appropriately.

Leadership and Supervision

Leadership plays a critical role in shaping the tone, philosophy, and expectations for a law enforcement organization. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered to support a comprehensive approach to revised training practices and contemporary policing models.

- *Assess and reform organization culture to align with organizational philosophy and expectations.* Unclear operational philosophies, inconsistent messaging from leadership, and vague expectations can significantly impair organizational effectiveness. Leadership should conduct regular assessments of the police academy or department culture to ensure alignment with the agency's guiding philosophy, strategic goals, and current legal standards. This includes periodic reviews and, if necessary, revisions of the mission statements, values statement, or operational policies. Informed by this study's findings, organizational culture, internal messaging, and informal norms should be audited to prevent a drift to an extreme or unbalanced orientation.
- *Codify behavioral expectations of supervisors and instructors.* Establishing clear behavioral standards for supervisors and instructors promotes consistency in training and modeling. Participants in this study emphasized both recruits and officers often emulate the tone, demeanor, and professional attitudes of senior

personnel. To address this, agencies should implement supervisor specific training on EQ and the symbolic implications of supervisor behavior. Incorporating role-modeling as evaluative criteria on yearly evaluations or promotional assessments can reinforce appropriate behavioral norms and support positive professional development.

- *Use of reflective debriefing following noteworthy incidents or training events.*

Structures debriefing is particularly important in the context of use of force reviews. An officer's behavior is shaped by role orientation, behavioral expectations, and internal meaning making processes. Agencies should establish a formal debriefing protocol following all use of force incidents or other critical incidents. These debriefing processes should include guided reflection on mindset, perception, emotional regulation, and situationally dictated transitions, in addition to technical execution, review of policy adherence, or legal justification. Insights gained from such reflective reviews can inform targeted training efforts to address cognitive misinterpretations, distortions, and emotional dysregulation.

Recruiting

This study found that officers who demonstrate poor emotional regulation or impulsivity are more likely to misinterpret situations and inappropriately apply force. In contrast, participants characterized emotionally intelligent officers as those who are adept at de-escalation, adaptive behavior modulation, and more accurate interpretation of social cues, competencies commonly associated with high emotional intelligence. As such, integrating EQ assessments into the applicant selection process may offer a valuable

means of identifying candidate with greater capacities for emotional regulation, empathy, self-awareness, and sound judgment, all critical traits for effective, ethical policing.

When used as a part of broader selection strategy, EQ testing may help identify candidates more likely to respond positively to training, make sound decisions under pressure, and contribute constructively to both the agency's culture and to community relations. However, EQ assessments should not be used in isolation. Instead, they must be combined with other validated selection instruments and remain job-relevant to comply with human resource and legal standards.

Policy Development

To support a comprehensive program aimed at improving police training and delivery services, departments must revise existing policies to reflect the emerging expectations. Drawing from the insights of the police training professionals and prior recommendations, the following policy initiatives are proposed:

- *Integrate EQ training into basic training, continuing education, and in-service curriculum.* Participants repeatedly emphasized the importance of emotional self-regulation, stress management, and interpersonal awareness as essential competencies that enable officers to accurately analyze situational cues and to better utilize force that is effective, appropriate, and ethical.
- *Redesign use of force training to include, or emphasize, de-escalation and decision-making skills under stress.* Participants noted that officers who were not confident in their abilities, fearful, or unable to manage fear under stress, were more likely to over-rely on force as a means of situational control. Training

modules should be re-designed to prioritize de-escalation strategies and decision-making under pressure.

- *Codify guardian-oriented behaviors into departmental use of force policy.* It is acknowledged that use of force in general utilizes warrior-oriented behaviors as a default response. However, departmental policies should formally recognize that an officer's role orientation must remain fluid and responsive to the dynamics of each situation. Policies may define expected behaviors that reflect professional control, balanced response, and context-specific decision-making. According to participants of this study clearly indicated that an officer's role orientation should be fluid, based on situational demands, and controlled professionally.

Furthermore, policies may consider encouraging supervisors to evaluate use of force incidents not only on outcomes and legal justification but also on the officer's behavior, communications, emotional regulation, and decision-making throughout the event. This promotes accountability for both action and process.

- *Institutionalize officer self-reflection and self-assessment in after-action review.* Departments should implement structured mechanisms for officer self-assessment and reflection during post-incident debriefings. Officers should be encouraged to evaluate their actions, identify emotional triggers, and assess their stress management strategies. Supervisors can use these sessions to provide mentorship to help officers and to guide training improvements informed by real world experiences.

These policy recommendations are designed to align police training and operational expectations with modern understandings of police behavior, decision-making, and emotional regulation. Collectively, these measures aim to reduce inappropriate use of force, improve officer well-being, promote professionalism, and enhance public trust in law enforcement.

Conclusion

This qualitative, phenomenological study explored the question, “What influence do Oklahoma police training professionals feel that the warrior and guardian mentalities have on police use of force behavior?” The findings indicate that officers’ use of force behavior is substantially shaped by how they interpret and internalize their professional role identities. These identities, particularly the warrior and guardian mentalities, were most prominently developed through academy training, instructor and peer modeling, and field supervision. Early role imprinting reinforces either adaptive or maladaptive behavioral patterns and has a profound influence on their perceptions of policing and subsequent behavior. As such, curriculum design, instructor selection, and institutional culture must intentionally align with values that promote integrity, restraint, situational discernment, and professional service.

Contrary to popular discourse, the warrior and guardian mentalities were not viewed static or mutually exclusive, rather participants described them as fluid, socially influenced, and situationally dynamic. Accordingly, role identity and its’ appropriate applications, should be taught and reinforced as flexible and situationally reactive constructs. Participants lived experiences further indicated that officers who were

successful in the field adopted a balanced understanding of the warrior and guardian mentalities and were able to fluidly transition between them as circumstances required. Moreover, EQ and self-regulation emerged as critical competencies, enabling officers to demonstrate empathy, sound judgment, better discretion, and restraint in use of force encounters. These findings suggest that academy curricula and supervisory practices should intentionally foster EQ, self-regulation, and situational adaptability, not just tactical proficiency.

The data also indicated that unaddressed fear or low confidence in tactical or interpersonal skills may contribute to unnecessary or excessive use of force regardless of role orientation. This underscores the importance of incorporating training on stress management, fear regulation, realistic mental preparation, and confidence building strategies into curricula. Importantly, these findings help affirm that officers' behaviors are grounded in socially constructed meanings, consistent with symbolic interaction theory, indicating that mindset and interpretation are central to behavior. Police training professionals described how language, training, peer influence, training content, institutional norms, and informal messaging shape how new officers interpret their role, respond to threats, and justify use of force. If behavioral responses are shaped by socially constructed meanings, and those meanings can be informed or reshaped through purposeful training and modeling, then agencies must address the interpretive environments in which officers learn and develop their professional identities.

In sum, this study affirms that what officers believe they are profoundly influenced by how they act. By cultivating role flexibility, emotional insight, improved situational

assessment, and reflective thinking in training environments, law enforcement can develop officers better equipped to preserve life, uphold justice, and maintain public trust.

References

- Abudlhabib, A. A (2020). The impact of training methods on effective training process in Ajman Police; The moderating role of readiness for training. *Journal of Management Research*, 12(2), 25-52. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/jmr.v12i2.16483>
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (2011). Attitudes and the attitude-behavior relation: Reasoned and automatic processes. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 11(1), 1-33. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14792779943000116>
- Aksan, N., Kisac, B., Ayden, M., & Demirbuken, S. (2009). Symbolic interaction theory. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1, 901-904 <http://dx.doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2009.01.160>
- Alase, A. (2017). The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): A guide to a good qualitative research approach. *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies*, 5(2), <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.5n.2p.9>
- Al- Busaidi, Z. Q. (2008). Qualitative research and its uses in health care. *Sultan Qaboos University Medical Journal*, 8(1), 11-19.
- Alpert, G. P., & Dunham, R. G. (1997). The force factor: Measuring and assessing police use of force and suspect resistance. In G. P. Alpert, & R. G Dunham (Eds.), *Use of force by the police: Overview of national and local data* (pp. 45-60). National Institute of Justice.
- American Bar Association (2021). *Rule of law*. https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_education/resources/rule-of-law/
- Amin, M. E., Norgaard, L. S., Cavaco, A. M., Witry, M. J., Hillman, L., Cernasev, A., &

- Desselle, S. P. (2020). Establishing trustworthiness and authenticity in qualitative pharmacy research. *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy, 16*(10), 1472-1482. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sapharm.2020.02.005>
- Anderson, J. & Eppard, J. (1998). Van Kamm's method revisited. *Qualitative Health Research, 8*(3), <https://doi.org/10.1177/104973239800800310>
- Babbie, E. (2017). *The basics of social research* (7th ed.). Cengage.
- Ballis Lal, B. (1995). Symbolic interaction theories. *American Behavioral Scientist, 38*(3), 421-441. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0002764295038003005>
- Bazley, T. D., Lersh, K. M., & Mieczkowski, T. (2007). Officer force versus suspect resistance: A gendered analysis of patrol officers in an urban police department. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 35*(2), 183-192. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2007.01.005>
- Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research, 26*(13), 1802-1811. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870>
- Blake, D. (2016) Guardian vs Warrior: The many roles of a police officer. *PoliceOne*. <https://www.police1.com/community-policing/articles/guardian-vs-warrior-the-many-roles-of-a-police-officer-CCFezmlww8ridVyg/>
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. University of California Press
- Bohm, R. M., & Haley N. (2017). *Introduction to criminal justice* (9th ed.). McGraw-Hill.

- Bolger, P. C. (2015). Just following orders: A meta-analysis of the correlates of American police officer use of force decisions. *American Journal of Criminal Justice, 40*, 466-492. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-014-9278-y>
- Bonner, H. S. (2015). Police officer decision-making in dispute encounters: Digging deeper into the “Black Box”. *American Journal of Criminal Justice, 40*, 493-522. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-014-9274-2>
- Bowen, G. A (2005). Preparing a qualitative research-based dissertation: Lesson learned. *Qualitative Report, 10*(2), 202-222 <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2005.1846>
- Brandl, S. J., & Strohshine, M. S. (2012). The role of officer attributes, job characteristics, and arrest activity in explaining police use of force. *Criminal Justice Policy Review, 24*(5), 551-572. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887403412452424>
- Breckler, S. J. (1984). Empirical validation of affect, behavior, and cognition as distinct components of attitude. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 47*(6), 1191-1205. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.47.6.1191>
- Broderick, J.J. (1987). *Police in a time of change* (2nd ed.). Waveland Press.
- Brown, M.K. (1981). *Working the street: Police discretion and the dilemmas of reform*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Bulmer, M. (1984). *The Chicago School of Sociology: Institutionalization, diversity, and the rise of sociological research*. University of Chicago Press.
- Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2020). *Contacts between police and the public, 2018 – statistical tables*. <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cbpp18st.pdf>

- Chambliss, W. J., Hass, A. Y., & Moloney, C. (2017). *Criminology: Connecting theory, research, & practice* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Chenail, R. J. (2011). Interviewing the investigator: Strategies for addressing instrumentation and researcher bias concerns in qualitative research. *Qualitative Report, 16*(1), 255-262. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2011.1051>
- CITI Program (n.d.). *Human subjects protection training module*.
<https://www.citiprogram.org/index.cfm?pageID=154&icat=0&ac=0®ion=1&message=0>
- Connelly, L. M. (2016). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *MEDSURG Nursing, 25*(6), 435-436.
- Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training (2025). Training: Continuing education. <https://Oklahoma.gov/cleet/training/cleet-training.html>
- Cross, A. & Fine, A. (2024). Are police as guardian - oriented as they should be? Expectation – reality discrepancies are related to perceptions of legitimacy. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 94*(5), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2024.102260>
- Crow, M. S., & Adrion, B. (2011). Focal concerns and police use of force: Examining the factors associated with Taser use. *Police Quarterly, 14*(4).
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1098611111423740>
- Cullum, J. (2016). When serving meets surviving- officer mindset matters. *Community Policing Dispatch, 9*(2). U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Policing Services (COPS Office). https://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/02-2016/officer_mindset_matters.asp

- Dempsey, J. S., & Forst, L. S., Carter, S. B. (2019). *An introduction to policing* (9th ed). Cengage
- Di Nota, P. M., Huhta, J., Hietanen, T., & Ropo, E. (2023). Deriving expert knowledge of situational awareness in policing. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology, 38*, 539-554. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-023-09574-6>
- Dooner, C. & Maskaly, J. (2025). Examining the effect of warrior and guardian mindsets on attitudes toward use of force: An analysis of US police recruits. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice, 19*, np. <https://doi.org/10.1093/policing/paaf001>.
- Dworkin, S. (2012). Sample size policy for qualitative studies using in-depth interviews. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 41*, 1319-1320. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-012-0016-6>
- Eder, S., Keller, M.H., & Migliozi, B. (2021, April 18). As new police reform laws sweep across the U.S., some ask: Are they enough? *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/18/us/police-reform-bills.html>
- Eith, C., & Durose, M.R. (2011). *Contacts between the police and the public 2008*. Bureau of Justice Statistics. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpp08.pdf>
- Ellis, P. (2016). The language of research: Phenomenological research. *Wounds UK, 12*(1), 128-129. <https://www.wounds-uk.com/download/resource/931>
- Fabrigar, L.R., Petty, R.E., Smith, S. M., & Crites Jr., S.L. (2006). Understanding knowledge effects on attitude-behavior consistency: The role of relevance, complexity, and amount of knowledge. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 90*(4), 556- 577. <http://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.90.4.556>

- Fagan, J. & Tyler, T.R. (2004). Policing, order maintenance, and legitimacy. In G. Mesko, M. Pagen, & B. Dobovsek (Eds), *Policing in Central and Eastern Europe: Dilemmas of contemporary criminal justice*. Faculty of Criminal Justice, University of Maribor.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2020). *Crime in the United States 2019*.
<https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019>
- Fink, A.S. (2000). The role of the researcher in the qualitative research process: A potential barrier to archiving qualitative data. *Qualitative Social Research, 1*(3).
<file:///Users/epeterson/Downloads/1021-Article%20Text-3221-1-10-20080825.pdf>
- Forero, R., Nahidi, S., De Costa, J., Mosine, M., Fitzgerald, G., Gibson, N., McCarthy, S., & Aboagye-Sarfo, P. (2018). Application of four-dimension criteria to assess rigor of qualitative research in emergency medicine. *BMC Health Services Research, 18*(1), 120. Doi: 10.1186/s12913-018-2915-2
- Fossey, E., Harvey, C., McDermott, F., & Davidson, L. (2002). Understanding and evaluating qualitative research. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 36*(6), 717-732. <http://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1440-1614.2002.01100.x>
- Fusch, P., Fusch, G., & Ness, L. (2018). Denzin's paradigm shift: Revisiting triangulation in qualitative research. *Journal of Social Change, 10*(1), 19-32. Doi: 10.5590/JOSC.2018.10.1.02
- Fusch, P.I., & Ness, L.R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 20*(9), 1408-1416.

<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR20/9/fusch1.pdf>

Garner, J.H., Maxwell, C.D., & Heraux, C.G. (2006). Characteristics associated with the prevalence and severity of force used by police. *Justice Quarterly*, *19*(4), 705-746. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07418820200095401>

Garner, R. (2005). Police attitudes: The impact of experience after training. *Applied Psychology in Criminal Justice*, *1*(1), 56-70.

<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.617.1230&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

Gigerenzer, G. (2011). Heuristic decision making. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *62*, 451-482. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-120709-145346>

Girgenti-Malone, A.C., Khoder, C., Vega, G., & Castillo, D. (2017). College student's perceptions of police use of force: Do suspect race and ethnicity matter? *Police Practice and Research*, *18*(5), 492-506.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15614263.2017.1295244>

Glasman, L.R., & Albarracin, D. (2006). Forming attitudes that predict future behavior: A meta-analysis of the attitude-behavior relation. *Psychological Bulletin*, *132*(5), 778-822. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.132.5.778>

Goff, P.A., & Kahn, K.B. (2012). Racial bias in policing: Why we know less than we should. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, *6*(1), 177-210.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-2409.2011.01039.x>

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. Bantam Books

- Graham v. Connor, 490 U.S. 386 (1989).
- Hallinan, M. (2016). Are you ready for change? What the community expects from its police. *The Journal of California Law Enforcement*, 50(1), <https://cpoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/2016-Journal-Vol-50-No-1.pdf>.
- Hennick, M., Kaiser, B. (2021). Sample sizes for saturation in qualitative research: A systematic review of empirical tests. *Social Science & Medicine*, 292, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114523>
- Henry, G. & Wolfe, S. (2024). Testing the invariance of warrior and guardian orientations on the prioritization of procedural justice: Do officer demographics matter? *Policing: An International Journal*, 47(6), 1126-1143. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PIJPSM-06-2024-0090>
- Hess, K. M., Orthmann, C. H., & Cho, H. (2014). *Police operations: Theory and practice* (6th ed.). Delmar.
- Hickman, M. J. & Piquero, A. R. (2009). Organizational, administrative, and environmental correlates of complaints about police use of force: Does minority representation matter? *Crime & Delinquency*, 55(3), 3-27. DOI: 10.1177/0011128708316977
- Hickman, M. J., Piquero, A. R., & Garner, J. H. (2008). Toward a national estimate of police use of nonlethal force. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 7, 563-591. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9133.2008.00528.x>
- Hossain, M. (2024). Role perception and professional identity development of municipal police recruits in British Columbia. *Policing: An International Journal of Police*

Strategies & Management, 47(6), 897-912. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PIJPSM-09-2023-0122>.

- Hundersmark, S. (2009). Police recruit training: Facilitating learning between the academy and field training. *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, 78(8), 26-32. <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/police-recruit-training-facilitating-learning-between-academy-and>
- Hurst, T., & Franko, E. (2024). Guardian versus warrior cops: Predicting officers' support for coercive policing. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 35(2), 122-139. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2024.2357653>
- Ingram, J.R., Terrill, W., & Paoline III, E. A. (2018). Police culture and officer behavior: Application of a multilevel framework. *Criminology*, 56(4), 780-811. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12192>
- Kahn, K. B., & Martin, K. D. (2016). Policing and Race: Disparate treatment, perceptions, and policy responses. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 10(1), 82-121. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/sipr.12019>
- Kahn, K. B., Steele, J. S., McMahon, J. M., & Stewart, G. (2017). How suspect race affects police use of force in an interaction over time. *Law and Human Behavior*, 41(2), 117- 126. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1hb0000218>
- Kahnman, D. (2011). *Thinking fast and slow*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Kaminski, R. J., DiGiovanni, C., & Downs, R. (2004). The use of force between police and persons with impaired judgment. *Police Quarterly*, 7(3), 311-338. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1098611103253456>

- Kearns, E. M. (2015). The President's Task Force on 21st century policing: Final report. <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1126&context=criminaljusticefacpub>
- Klahm IV, C. F., & Tillyer, R. (2010). Understanding police use of force: A review of the evidence. *Southwest Journal of Criminal Justice*, 7(2), 214-239. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Charles_Klahm/publication/256255286_Understanding_police_use_of_force_A_review_of_the_evidence/links/004635220bab4505c6000000/Understanding-police-use-of-force-A-review-of-the-evidence.pdf
- Klein, G. (2016, May 01). Mindsets: What are they and why they matter. *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/seeing-what-others-dont/201605/mindsets>
- Kramer, R., & Remster, B. (2018). Stop, frisk, and assault? Racial disparities in police use of force during investigatory stops. *Law & Society Review*, 52(4). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/lasr.12366>
- Kyprianides, A., Yesberg, J., Milani, J., Bradford, B., Quiton, P. (2021). Perceptions of police use of force: The importance of trust. *Policing*, 44(1), 175-190. Doi: 10.1108/PIJPSM-07-2020-0111
- Landry, L. (2019). Why emotional intelligence is important in leadership. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/emotional-intelligence-in-leadership>
- Law Enforcement Action Partnership (2021). *Sir Robert Peel's policing principles*. <https://lawenforcementactionpartnership.org/peel-policing-principles/>

- Lee, H., Jang, H., Lim, I., & Tushaus, D. W. (2010). An examination of police use of force utilizing police training and neighborhood contextual factors. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 33(4), 681-702.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/13639511011085088>
- Lee, H. & Vaughn, M. (2010). Organizational factors that contribute to police use of deadly force liability. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 38(2), 193-206.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2010.02.001>
- Lentz, S. A., & Chaires, R. H. (2006). The invention of Peel's Principles: A study of policing 'textbook' history. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 35(1), 69-79.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2006.11.016>
- Malmqvist, J., Hellberg, K., Mollas, G., Rose, R., & Shevlin, M. (2019). Conducting the pilot study: A neglected part of the research process? Methodological findings supporting the importance of piloting in qualitative research studies. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 18, 1-11. Doi: 10.1177/1609406919878341.
- Mason, M. (2010). Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews. *Qualitative Social Research*, 11(8), Art. 8. <https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/download/1428/3028/>
- Mayer, J. D. & Salovey, P. (1993). The intelligence of emotional intelligence. *Intelligence*, 17(4), 433-442, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-2896\(93\)90020-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-2896(93)90020-x)
- Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. (2004). Emotional intelligence: Theory, findings, and implications. *Psychological Inquiry*, 15(3), 197-215.
https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli1503_02

- McLean, K. (2019). Is there any evidence concerning the warrior/guardian debate in policing? *PoliceOne*. <https://www.police1.com/research/articles/is-there-any-evidence-concerning-the-warriorguardian-debate-in-policing-y9hPZjiBHXrYOcB/>
- McLean, K., Alpert, G., & McCarthy, M. (2023). The influence of guardian and warrior police orientations on use of force attitudes and tactical decision making. *Police Quarterly*, 27(2), 187-212. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10986111231189857>
- McLean, K., Wolfe, S. E., Rojek, J., Alpert, G. P., & Smith, M. R. (2018). Police officers as warriors or guardians: Empirical reality or intriguing rhetoric? *Justice Quarterly*, 1-23. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2018.1533031>
- McLean, K., Wolfe, S. E., & Rojek, J. (2024). Us versus them? The problem of cognitive distortions in policing. *Police Quarterly*, 27(4), np. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10986111241234310>
- Mears, D. P., Craig, M. O., Stewart, E. A., & Warren, P. Y. (2017). Thinking fast, not slow: How cognitive biases may contribute to racial disparities in use of force in police-citizen encounters. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 53, 12-24. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2017.09.001>
- Men, L. R. (2014). Strategic internal communication: Transformational leadership, communication channels, and employee satisfaction. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 28(2), 264-284. Doi:10.1177/0893318914524536.
- Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice* (1st ed.). Jossy - Bass.
- Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. (2020). *In Definition of guardian*.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/guardian>

Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. (2020). *In Definition of warrior.*

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/warrior>

Moore, H. W., Vito, G. F., & Walsh, W. F. (2012). *Organizational behavior and management in law enforcement* (3rd ed.). Pearson.

Morgan, M. A., Logan, M. W., & Olma, T. M. (2020). Police use of force: An inmate perspective. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *67*, 1-10.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2020.101673>

Motley, R. O., & Joe, S. (2023). Exposure to police use of force, perceived police legitimacy, and personal safety interventions among Black emerging adult college students. *Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research*, *14*(3), 653-675.

DOI: 10.1086/717586

Moulds, O. (2021). Fracking the bedrock of democracy: The United States policing of protests violates the right of peaceful assembly under the ICCPR. *American University International Law Review*, *36*(4), 887-927.

<https://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2074&context=auilr>

Moustakas, C. E. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage.

Muir Jr., W. K. (1979). *Police: Streetcorner politicians*. University of Chicago Press.

Mullinex, K. J., Bolsen, T., Norris, R. J. (2021). The feedback effect of controversial police use of force. *Political Behavior*, *43*(2), 881-898. Doi: 10.1007/s11109-020-09646-x

- Murphy, K., & McCarthy, M. (2024). Guardian versus warrior cops: Predicting officers' support for procedural justice and coercive policing. *Policing and Society*, 34(1), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2024.2357653>
- Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2015). Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidenced-Based Nursing*, 18(2), 34-35. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/eb-2015-102054>
- Norquist, R. (2019). Conceptual metaphors. <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-conceptual-metaphor-1689899>
- Oklahoma Administrative Code, Section 390:15-1-9 (2022).
<https://casetext.com/regulation/oklahoma-administrative-code/title-390-council-on-law-enforcement-education-and-training/chapter-15-basic-peace-officer-certification-training/subchapter-1-basic-academy-programs/section-39015-1-9-council-instructors>
- Oklahoma Statutes Sec. 70-3311.16 (2024). Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training (CLEET). Retrieved 11-02-25 from
<https://law.justia.com/oklahoma/title-70/section-70-3311-16/>
- OpenAI. (2025). *ChatGPT 4o*. [Http://www.chatgpt.com](http://www.chatgpt.com)
- Owens, E. (2006). Conversational space and participant shame in interviewing. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(6), 1160-1179.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1077800406293236>
- Paoline III, E. A. (2004). Shedding light on police culture: An examination of officers' occupational attitudes. *Police Quarterly*, 7(2), 205-236.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1098611103257074>

Paoline III, E. A., & Gau, J. M. (2017). Police occupational culture: Testing the monolithic model. *Justice Quarterly*, 35(4), 670-698.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2017.1335764>

Paoline III, E. A., Gau, J. M., & Terrill, W. (2016). Race and the police use of force encounter in the United States. *British Journal of Criminology*, 58(1), 54-74.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azw089>

Paoline III, E. A., & Terrill, W. (2007). Police education, experience, and the use of force. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 34(2), 179-196.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0093854806290239>

Parker, K., MacDonald, J., Jennings, W., & Alpert, G. (2005). Racial threat, urban conditions and police use of force: Assessing the direct and indirect linkages across multiple urban areas. *Justice Research and Policy*, 7(1), 53-79.

<https://doi.org/10.3818/JRP.7.1.2005.53>

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Sage

Peat, J., Mellis, C., Williams, K. & Xuan, W. (2002). *Health science research: A handbook of qualitative methods*. Sage

Pelzang, R. & Hutchinson, A. M. (2018). Establishing cultural integrity in qualitative research: Reflections from a cross-cultural study. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17, 1-9. Doi: 10.1177/1609406917749703.

Pezalla, A. E., Pettigrew, J., & Miller-Day, M. (2012). Researching the researcher-as-instrument: An exercise in interviewer self-reflexivity. *Qualitative Research*,

- 12(2), 165-185. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1487941111422107>
- Pollack, O. (1950). *The criminality of women*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Puranda, K. C. (2022). *Belief, skill sets, and behaviors of police officers regarding mental health treatment* (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University). Walden University ScholarWorks. <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations/14971>
- QSR International (2022). *NVivo qualitative data analysis software*. <https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo-qualitative-data-analysis-software/about/nvivo>
- Rahr, S., & Rice, S. K. (2015). From warriors to guardians: Recommitting the American police culture to democratic ideals. *New Perspectives in Policing*, 1-16. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/248654.pdf>
- Ramchunder, Y., & Martins, N. (2014). The role of emotional intelligence in the job performance of South African police officers. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 40(10), 1-9. <https://www.doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v40i1.1101>
- Ravitch, S. M. & Carl, N. M. (2016). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological*. Sage.
- Rhodes, L. (2020). Human rights, those who are governed and the legitimacy of law enforcement. *Comparative Citizens Review*, 82(82), 5-13. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2138&context=ccr>
- Robbins, S. P. & Judge, T. A. (2018). *Organizational behavior* (18th ed.). Pearson
- Rockwell, A. R., Bishopp, S. A., & Orrick, E. A. (2020). Do policy and training changes influence patterns of police use of force? An interrupted time-series analysis.

Policing: An International Journal, 44(3), 469-482. DOI 10.1108/PIJPSM-07-2020-0128

Rhodes, L. (2020). Human rights, those who are governed and the legitimacy of law enforcement. *Comparative Citizens Review*, 82(82), 5-13.

<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2138&context=cer>

Robbins, S., & Judge, T. A. (2017). *Essentials of organizational behavior* (14th ed.). Pearson.

Rolls, L., & Relf, M. (2006). Bracketing interviews: Addressing methodological challenges in qualitative interviewing in bereavement and palliative care.

Mortality, 11(3), 285-305, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13576270600774893>.

Rorholm, A. M. (2021). Interruptive symbology: Servant-leadership from micro-observation to macro-movement. *The International Journal of Servant-*

Leadership, 15(1), 103-136. [https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-](https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/interruptive-symbology-servant-leadership-micro/docview/2645226171/se-2?accountid=14872)

[journals/interruptive-symbology-servant-leadership-](https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/interruptive-symbology-servant-leadership-micro/docview/2645226171/se-2?accountid=14872)

[micro/docview/2645226171/se-2?accountid=14872](https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/interruptive-symbology-servant-leadership-micro/docview/2645226171/se-2?accountid=14872)

Ross, D. L. (2018). *Civil liability in criminal justice* (7th ed.). Routledge.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (3rd ed.). Sage

Rydberg, J., & Terrill, W. (2010). The effect of higher education on police behavior.

Police Quarterly, 13(1), 92-120. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1098611109357325>

Sample, J., & Warland, R. (1973). Attitude and prediction of behavior. *Social Forces*,

51(3). <http://dx.doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2577135>

- Saldona, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Sage
- Salovey, P., Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D. R., & Sitarenios, G. (2001). Emotional intelligence as a standard for intelligence. *Emotion, 1*(3), 232-242.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12934682/>
- Sandstrom, K., Martin, D., & Fine, G. A. (2009). *Symbols, selves, and social reality: A symbolic interactionist approach to social psychology and sociology* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H. & Jinks, C. (2017). Saturation in qualitative research: Exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity, 52*(4), 1893-1907.
Doi:10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8
- Schmallegger, F. (2019). *Criminal justice today: An introductory text for the 21st century* (15th ed.). Pearson.
- Schmallegger, F. (2021). *Criminology today: An integrative introduction* (10th ed.). Pearson.
- Schuck, A. (2023). Exploring the guardian mindset as a strategy for improving police – community relations. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology, 38*(2), 210-223.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-022-09523-6>
- Schwartz, C. (2015). Close to home: Warrior or guardian? A good officer is both.
<https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/opinion/close-to-home-warrior-or-guardian-a-good-officer-is-both/?sba=AAS>
- Seigel, L. J. & Welsh, B. C. (2017). *Juvenile delinquency: Theory, practice, and law*

(13th ed.). Cengage.

- Seitz, M. J., Bode, N. W., & Koster, G. (2016, August 13). How cognitive heuristics can explain social interactions in spatial movement. *Journal of the Royal Society, Interface*, 121. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rsif.2016.0439>
- Shane, J. M., Lawton, B., & Swenson, Z. (2017). The prevalence of police shootings by U.S. police, 2015-2016: Patterns and answers from a new data set. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 52, 101-111. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2017.05.001>
- Siegel, L. J., & Senna, J. J. (2007). *Introduction to criminal justice* (11th ed.). Wadsworth.
- Silver, J, Roche, S., Bilach, T., & Ryon, S. (2017). Traditional police culture, use of force, and procedural justice: Investigating individual, organizational, and contextual factors. *Justice Quarterly*, 34(7), 1272-1309. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2017.1381756>.
- Simon, S. (2021). Training for war: Academy socialization and warrior policing. *Social Problems*, 00, p. 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spab057/6369183>.
- Smith, J., Nizza, I. (2022). *Essentials of interpretive phenomenological analysis*. American Psychological Society.
- Smith, M. R, Kaminski, R. J., Alpert, G. P., Fridell, L. A., Macdonald, J., & Kubu, B. (2010). *A multi-method evaluation of police use of force outcomes: Final report to the National Institute of Justice*. U.S. Department of Justice: <http://internationalresponsestocrime.pbworks.com/w/file/86744632/smith%20kaminski%20alpert%20fridell%20macdonald%20and%20kubu%202010%20us>

e%20of%20force%20and%20injury%20study.pdf

- Stoughton, S. (2014, December 12). How police training contributes to avoidable deaths. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/12/police-gun-shooting-training-ferguson/383681>
- Stoughton, S. (2015). Law enforcement's "warrior" problem. *Harvard Law Review*, *128*(6). <https://harvardlawreview.org/2015/04/law-enforcement-warrior-problem/>
- Stoughton, S. (2016). Principled policing: Warrior cops and guardian officers. *Wake Forest Law Review*, *51*(3). 611-676
- Strom, K. J., & Wire, S. (2024). The impact of police violence on communities: Unpacking how fatal use of force influences resident calls to 911 and police activity. *RTI International Press*. DOI: 10.3768/rtipress.2024.rr.0050.2401
- Stryker, S. (1959, May). Symbolic interaction as an approach to family research. *National Council on Family Relations*, *21*(2), 111-19. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/348099>
- Summerson, H. (2007). The enforcement of the Statute of Winchester. *Journal of Legal History*, *3*(3), 232-250. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01440369208531061>
- Sun, I. Y., & Payne, B. K. (2004). Racial differences in resolving conflicts: A comparison between black and white police officers. *Crime & Delinquency*, *50*(4), 516-541. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0011128703259298>
- Terrill, W., Leinfelt, F. H., & Kwak, D. (2007). Examining police use of force: A smaller agency perspective. *Policing: An international Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, *31*(1), 57-76 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/13639510810852576>

- Terrill, W., & Mastrofsky, S. D. (2002). Situational and offer-based determinants of police coercion. *Justice Quarterly*, *19*(2), 215-248. <http://dx.doi.org/10-1080/07418820200095221>
- Terry, D. J., & Hogg, M. A. (2000). Applied social research. Attitudes, behavior, and social context: The role of norms and group membership. In D. J. Terry, M. A. Hodd, & K. M. White (Eds.), *Attitude-behavior relations: Social identity and group membership* (pp.67-93). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Thibodeau, P. H., Crow, L., & Flusberg, S. J. (2016). The metaphor police: A case study of the role of metaphor in explanation. *Psychonomic Bulletin Review*, *24*, 1375-1386. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3758/s13423-016-1192-5>
- Tufford, L. & Newman, P. (2010). Bracketing in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work*, *11*(1), 80-96, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325010368316>
- Tyler, T. R. (2015). Procedural justice, legitimacy, and effective law enforcement. *Crime and Justice*, *44*(1), 253-308. <https://doi.org/10.1086/681553>
- U.S. Department of Justice. (2019). Crime in the United States: Estimated number of arrests in 2019. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/table-29>
- Van Brocklin, V. (2019). Warriors vs. Guardians: A seismic shift in policing or just semantics? *PoliceOne*. <https://www.police1.com/21st-century-policing-task-force/articles/warriors-vs-guardians-a-seismic-shift-in-policing-or-just-semantics-EXBkY2pEWCHi6Mni/>
- Van Der Meer, J., Vermeeren, B., & Steijn, B. (2023). Why do roles perceptions matter?

A qualitative study on role conflicts and the coping behavior of Dutch municipal enforcement officers. *Urban Affairs Review*, 60(2),

<https://doi.org/10.1177/10780874231203892>

Van Teijlingen, E. R. & Hundley, V. (2001). The importance of pilot studies. *Social Research Update*, 35, 1-4.

<https://aura.abdn.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/2164/157/SRU35%20pilot%20studies.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Vito, G., Reed, J., & More, H. (2019). *Organizational behavior and management in law enforcement* (4th ed.). Pearson.

Vitro, C., Clark, D. A., Sherman, C., Heitzeg, M. M., & Hicks, B. M. (2022). Attitudes about police and race in the United States 2020-2021: Mean level trends and association with political attitudes, psychiatric problems, and COVID-19 outcomes. *PLOS ONE*, 17(7), e0271954.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0271954>

Vorozhbitove, A. A., & Issina, G. I. (2013). Systems of terminological triads “Mentality – mindset – mental space”, “Concept – text concept – discourse concept”: Linguistic rhetoric aspect. *European Researcher*, 47(4), 1014-1018.

http://www.erjournal.ru/journals_n/1367687403.pdf

Walden University (2022). Qualitative dissertation checklist.

<https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/research-center/program-documents>

Welsh, E. (2002). Dealing with data: Using NVivo in the qualitative data analysis process. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 3(2), 1-9. <http://qualquant.org/wp->

content/uploads/text/2002%20Welsh.pdf

- Weisburg, E. K. (2024). Whose help is on the way?: The importance of individual police officers in law enforcement outcomes. *Journal of Human Resources*, 59(4), 1122-1149. <https://doi.org/10.3368/jhr.0720-11019R2>
- Wendel, M.L., Jones, G., Nation, M., Howard, T., Jackson, T., Brown, A. A., & Kerr, J. (2022). Their help is not helping: Policing as a tool of structural violence against Black communities. *Psychology of Violence*, 12(4), 231-240. <https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000411>
- Wilson, J. Q. (1978). *Varieties of police behavior: The management of law and order in eight communities*. Harvard University Press.
- Wolfe, R., Mesloh, C., Henych, M., & Thompson, L. F. (2009). Police use of force and the cumulative force factor. *International Journal of Police strategies and management*, 32(4), 739-757. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/13639510911000795>
- Worden, R. E. (1995). Police officers' belief systems: A framework for analysis. *American Journal of Police*, 14(1), 49-80. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/07358549519152979>
- Wright II, J. E. & Headley, A. M. (2020). Police use of force interactions: Is race relevant or gender germane?. *American Review of Public Administration*, 1-14. DOI:10.1177/0275074020919908
- Wyer, R. S., Jr., & Radvansky, G. A. (1999). The comprehension and validation of social information. *Psychological Review*, 106(1), 89-118. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.106.1.89>

- Yeung, L. (2015). Validity, reliability, and generalization in qualitative research. *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*, 3(3), 324-327.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.4103/2249-4863.161306>
- Yin, R. K. (2016). *Qualitative research from start to finish* (2nd ed). The Guilford Press.
- Zamawe, F. C. (2015). The implications of using NVivo software in qualitative data analysis: Evidence-based reflections. *Malawi Medical Journal*, 27(1), 13-15.
<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/mmj/article/download/116229/105755>
- Zanna, E. P. (Ed.). (1990). Multiple processes by which attitudes guide behavior: The mode model as an integrative framework. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, pp 75-105). Academic Press, Inc.
- Zare, H., Maier, S. L., Komaromy, M., & Sanchez, S. (2024). Disparities in policing from theory to practice. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 12, Article 10937607.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2024.10937607>
- Zikmund, W. G. (2003). *Business research methods* (7th ed.). South Western.