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Experiences and Perceptions Regarding Emergency Telephone Number Use Relative to Civic Engagement

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Abstract

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MS, Saint Leo University, 2012

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Lack of engagement in public service awareness education programs, coupled with reduced funding to implement a diversion system such as 311 systems or 10-digit phone numbers, contribute to 911 misuse. Many local governments have invested in alternative systems, but research regarding community members' use of 911 or alternatives relative to civic engagement is lacking. Guided by Gordon's conceptualization of civic engagement, this phenomenological study bridged the gap in knowledge by exploring community members' civic involvement and their use of 911 between 2012 and 2015 in a county in the state of Georgia. A snowball sampling strategy was used to select 5 community members who had used 911 to call for service. Data were collected through semistructured interviews. These data were inductively coded and then subjected to thematic analysis. Findings indicated that participants were not aware of the problems associated with 911 misuse, and they had limited knowledge of 911 call system practices and procedures from an operational standpoint. Participants believed that more awareness and education is necessary to educate and make community members aware of problems associated to 911 misuse and to inform community members of the nonemergency number. Positive social change may be achieved through local governments implementing public awareness campaigns about appropriate 911 use. These efforts may result in improvements to public safety through better response to critical emergency events.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved mother, Lucille Ellen Henderson, who transitioned from this life on January 4, 2009. My mom was a true inspiration and she taught me the importance of loving, caring, and giving to others while remaining humble and grateful. I truly thank God for allowing a wonderful mom to be a part of my life. This dissertation is also dedicated to the loving memory of my father, Anthony Charles White, who passed away on May 21, 2014. My father called every Sunday to praise me for being a wonderful daughter, loving mother, dedicated wife, and hard worker.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In the United States, 911 is the primary emergency phone number that community members use to request emergency responders for emergency purposes (Hess, 2009). However, research on 911 communication systems has not only shown that community members also dial 911 for nonemergency purposes (Agarwal, 2013; Holmes, 2007; Industry Council for Emergency Response Technologies [iCERT], 2011; U.S. Department of Justice, 2008), but that the majority of calls to 911 communications centers are for nonemergency public service requests. In the mid-1980s, community members began to dial 911 increasingly for nonemergencies, such as thefts of items from vehicles, lost property, sanitation pickup times, football game times, and directions to local events (Blau, Gibson, & Bentley, 2012; Holmes, 2007; Swanson, Territo, & Taylor, 2012). As a result, the 911 system became overburdened as 911 dispatchers sent emergency crews and police officers to handle nonurgent situations, thereby interfering with life-threatening emergencies (Holmes, 2007; Ortmeier & Meese, 2010; Swanson et al., 2012).

Lack of civic engagement, lack of civic involvement in public service awareness education programs, and lack of funding to implement a diversion system contribute to 911 misuse (iCERT, 2011; Sampson, 2004). Often, 311 and 10-digit nonemergency numbers exist, but community members do not know about these numbers or that they should use them to request public services or to report nonemergency problems (iCERT, 2011). When programs such as 311 exist, civic leaders implement them without the input and inclusion of community members (Fleming & Phelan, 2010). Civic engagement has

been an effective tool in educating community members on public services (Fleming &

Phelan, 2010; Sampson, 2004). The mission of civic engagement is for community

members to understand the relevancy of effective and productive communication skills,

connect with other community members and decision makers, and achieve ongoing

involvement in addressing community affairs, particularly matters affecting their

communities. It is important to understand the motivational factors credited to civic

engagement. Hauptmann (2005) defined civic engagement as an

> active involvement in the affairs of an organization including setting and working
>
> toward the achievement of organizational goals, while clearly expressing personal
>
> goals and striving for identifiable results of the activities for which and for their
>
> consequences one is responsible. (p. 5)

Responsibility, values, and vocation are key components of civic engagement

(Hauptmann, 2005). Gordon, Baldwin-Philippi, and Balestra (2013) asserted that certain

human behavior characteristics dictate how people participate in public affairs; therefore,

trust, empowerment, and knowledge and action are the social constructs to civic

engagement. Chapter 1 includes the background of the study, statement of the problem,

purpose of the study, research question, theoretical framework, nature of the study,

definition of terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, significance of the

study, and summary.

Background of the Study

Since 1968, calls placed to 911 have led to lifesaving emergency services

provided to the scenes of crimes, fires, accidents, and medical crises (National

Emergency Number Association [NENA], 2014; Solomon & Uchida, 2003). By 1996, community members' use of 911 for nonemergency purposes reached a magnitude that gained national attention from the White House and the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). At that time, the 311 number served as the national help number for nonemergencies (Solomon & Uchida, 2003). Since the first 311 system launched in Baltimore in 1996, municipal leaders throughout the United States have implemented similar nonemergency systems (Nam & Pardo, 2013). Many cities experience a variety of concerns, such as waste management, utilities, transportation, public safety, environmental pollution, climate change, and deteriorating infrastructures (Nam, 2012). In working to solve these challenges, city leaders face obstacles such as recessionary pressures, budget cuts, and increasing demands from community members. Therefore, city leaders have consolidated municipal services to be more efficient, effective, transparent, accountable, and sustainable (Chourabi et al., 2012; Nam & Pardo, 2011a, 2011b; Washburn et al., 2010).

Some counties and municipalities have a three-digit number such as 311, whereas others use a local 10-digit number. Ten-digit nonemergency numbers serve as an alternative number to the emergency 911 call system for community members' request for public services and information during nonemergency situations (U.S. Department of Justice COPS, 2008). Nonemergency numbers serve to divert nonemergency calls to 911 and to improve the 911 emergency communications systems in an efficient and effective manner (Holmes, 2007).

Researchers have found that implementing 311 and other nonemergency numbers is effective when the planning and decision-making process includes community members (Phelan, 2010). Lerman and Weaver (2014) collected data from New York City's 311 nonemergency system to measure community member–police contact. Lerman and Weaver examined police-initiated contacts in urban communities and the effect they had on problematic policing and community policing efforts. Clark, Brudney, and Jang (2013) investigated citizens' use of 311 for governmental services. Nam and Pardo (2013) conducted a comparative case study on 311 in New York and Philadelphia. Blau et al. (2012) conducted phone surveys to investigate what influenced retired and employed individuals to call 911 when they were in a simulated emergency. Wentz and Schlimgen (2011) conducted a research study to explore citizens' perception of the types of police services provided to community members. Justice and Meares (2013) examined the relationship between citizens educating themselves about the criminal justice field through personal criminal and noncriminal experiences and civic engagement. Fleming and Phelan (2010) explored the relationship between 311 use and civic engagement in Savannah, Georgia. Lord, Kuhns, and Friday (2009) examined community-oriented policing and its relationship to citizens' satisfaction of police services and discovered race, socioeconomic status, and citizen-initiated contact played a role in citizens' satisfaction, which showed a relationship between employing community-orienting policing strategies and citizens' knowledge of police services and practices. Schwester, Carrizales, and Holzer (2009) examined the 311 system as a tool to alleviate the number of nonemergency calls that entered the 911 system.

Although research exists regarding the effectiveness of 311 reducing the number of nonemergency calls to 911 communications centers, additional research is necessary to explore the relationship between civic engagement and 911 use. Gordon et al. (2013) recommended future studies on civic engagement and new facets of the social science discipline, and Hauptmann (2005) asserted that civic engagement serves as a tool to address social problems; hence, "the call for civic engagement has, therefore, a special urgency" (p. 7). Lerman and Weaver (2014) recommended future research "to measure these dynamics in new and encompassing ways…more direct way that citizens connect with their governing institutions" (p. 216). Thus, this research study involved exploring community members' civic engagement and 911 use.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of emergency 911 communications centers is to answer calls for emergency services (Blau et al., 2012). The problem of 911 misuse has prompted leaders of public safety organizations to address the problem of 911 misuse for nonemergencies (Blau et al., 2012; Henry County Board of Commissioners, 2016). In the state of Georgia, a number of police agency leaders have used public education to address the proper protocol for community members who use 911 (Henry County Board of Commissioners, 2016). Specifically, many Georgia public safety department managers have implemented websites to inform and educate community members on when to use and not use 911 (Henry County Board of Commissioners, 2016). However, 911 emergency communications centers are still experiencing increased numbers of nonemergency calls and nondispatched calls. For example, in January 2016, in Henry County, Georgia, the

emergency 911 communications center received 10,868 calls for police, of which 8,296

were dispatched for police service (Henry County Board of Commissioner, 2016, para.

2). In February 2016, Henry County emergency 911 communications center received

9,472 calls for police, of which 8,200 were dispatched for police service. These data

indicate that a significant portion of 911 calls are potentially nonemergency calls for

service and may need directing elsewhere in the county for assistance and service.

The misuse of 911 affects emergency communication centers, community

members, and public safety responders (Swanson et al., 2012). Two hundred forty million

calls enter U.S. 911 communications systems yearly (NENA, 2014), and lack of public

education funding and citizens' reliance on governmental services contribute to the

misuse of overburdened 911 systems (iCERT, 2011). Sampson (2004) noted that the

misuse of, and intentional calls to, 911 was for non-life-threatening nonemergency

incidents such as incidents that had already occurred (e.g., theft from vehicles, lost

property) or for nonpolice matters (e.g., wanting to know the time of day, city council

meetings). Holmes (2007) reported that community members expect answers and demand

governmental services when they dial 911. Consequently, when community members dial

911, their expectations are high due to their understanding of their paid fees for

governmental services, particularly for police services. Emergency call takers and

community members play a vital role in reducing the misuse and abuse of 911 for

nonemergency problems (U.S. Department of Justice COPS, 2008). Although many

researchers have focused on how counties or municipalities with 311 nonemergency

contact centers contribute to customer service and city management (e.g., Barnhouse,

2008; Eichenthal, Fleming, & Keshav, 2009; Fleming, 2007, 2008a, 2008b; Fleming & Barnhouse, 2006; Fleming, Stern, & Tharp, 2008; McGalliard, 2008; Phelan, 2010), I explored community members' civic involvement and 911 use.

The leaders of the Georgia county police department used in this study incorporated 10-digit nonemergency numbers and a 311 call center to address the overburdened number of nonemergency calls to the 911 communications center. Hauptmann (2005) reported that civic engagement based on current solutions has not produced effective results. As a result, the researcher noted that it is important to address the 911 misuse problem from an operational standpoint and analyze community activities and efforts. Furthermore, Hauptmann asserted that participation in political affairs and organizational membership or affiliation with public organizations are often the measures of civic engagement.

Research is lacking on the experiences of community members who used 911 in relation to their knowledge of 911 and civic engagement. The perceptions of community members are important to increase civic engagement and reduce 911 misuse. Research is also lacking on 911 misuse and civic engagement through the theoretical lens of Gordon et al.'s (2013) civic engagement theory and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory (SCT). With these two theories as the theoretical foundation, a qualitative phenomenological research study was necessary to explore community members' perceptions about the experiences of community members who used 911 in relation to their knowledge of 911 and civic engagement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of five community members with regard to their use of 911 in relation to their knowledge of 911 and civic engagement in a county in the state of Georgia. Civic engagement refers to active involvement in community planning, decision-making processes, and civic matters that affect community affairs (Fleming & Phelan, 2010). Trust, empowerment, and knowledge and action are constructs of civic engagement (Gordon et al., 2013). The concept of fair practices in civic matters or decision-making processes is the basis of trust in civic affairs (Gordon et al., 2013; Terwel, Harinck, Ellemers, & Daamen, 2010). As reflected in social movements and in the social science discipline, empowerment is the main component of political efficacy and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Gordon et al., 2013; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Empowerment is the level of control that individuals have over the outcome or decisions that affect them in relation to personal, collective, or institutional matters (Gordon et al., 2013; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Gordon et al.'s (2013) civic engagement theory and Bandura's (1986) SCT served as the theoretical foundation of this study. I collected data through in-depth semistructured interviews with five community members in a county in the state of Georgia.

Research Questions

This qualitative phenomenological research study included one central research question: What are the experiences of community members who used 911 in relation to their knowledge of 911 and civic engagement?

Six subquestions were as follows:

1. What factors motivate community members to use 911?

2. How do community members describe their experience with their use of 911?

3. How do community members describe their experiences with their use of the nonemergency number?

4. How do community members describe emergencies?

5. What factors motivate community members to engage in civic affairs?

6. How do community members who call 911 for nonemergency situations talk about trust, empowerment, and knowledge and action?

Theoretical Framework

Gordon et al.'s (2013) civic engagement theory and Bandura's (1986) SCT served as the theoretical framework for this study. This section includes a brief overview of the theories, with a more detailed explanation provided in Chapter 2. The subsections in this section are on civic engagement theory and SCT.

Civic Engagement Theory

Behavioral characteristics in people determine their levels of involvement and indicate how and why people engage in civic matters (Gordon et al., 2013). Gordon et al. (2013) noted certain human behavioral characteristics dictate how people participate in

public affairs. Gordon et al. (2013) posited that trust, empowerment, and knowledge and action are the social constructs of civic engagement.

Trust in decision makers influences how much community members will participate in public affairs; therefore, it is the responsibility of decision makers to incorporate a process to establish and maintain trustworthy relationships with community members (Gordon et al., 2013). Gordon et al. (2013) reported that in politics, distributive justice influences civic engagement, promotes the positive perception of community members, and increases customer satisfaction in decision makers. In addition, trust is established through an open-ended form of communication between community members and decision makers. Gordon et al. (2013) noted that allowing community members to have a voice in public affairs aligns with distributive justice practices, and civic leaders perceive this as an effective step toward establishing and maintaining trust. Civic engagement provides community members with a voice on civic matters affecting their communities and quality of life, while ensuring government leaders hear and understand their demands and concerns. Gordon et al. (2013) claimed that this process of inclusion allows community members to have a voice and debate opinions and beliefs on community policy implementation, community planning, decision making, and other communal actions or civic actions affecting their communities. Wentz and Schlimgen (2011) further asserted that citizen involvement or lack of involvement could contribute positively or negatively to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of police duties and operations. Therefore, it is imperative for citizens to have a voice in community affairs, particularly to improve police–citizen relationships and police services.

Empowerment is the key motivational element that drives individuals, organizations, and communities (Gordon et al., 2013). Gordon et al. (2013) related that through empowerment, goals are set and achievements are expected through vigorous action and active participation in civic or political affairs. Gordon et al. (2013) noted that empowered individuals possess high levels of self-efficacy and feel motivated to participate and engage in civic matters. Competent, determined, and ambitious individuals feel empowered to participate in political and civic affairs for personal economic gain (Bandura, 1997; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Bandura (1997) suggested that self-efficacy is a pivotal component in civic engagement, and individuals with high self-efficacy feel driven to have personal sustainability and are willing to use their skills and competencies to gain access and control of desired resources. Gordon et al. (2013) indicated that organizational leaders seek empowerment through internal members' skills and competencies. Gordon et al. (2013) noted that this level of empowerment is suitable for obtaining a winning resolution for organizational and communal needs. Thus, the purpose of organizational empowerment is to increase the community partnerships needed to strengthen the longevity of the organization. This two-way level of communication may create mutual support and feedback. Gordon et al. (2013) noted that the last level of empowerment is at the community level, and the purpose of community empowerment is to improve the quality of life within the community and includes social justice and equal access to capital resources.

Knowledge and action dictate the manner in which an individual engages in political and civic affairs (Gordon et al., 2013). Gordon et al. (2013) reported that

information is the driving force to keep community members informed of events occurring locally and nationally. Community members expect to receive information through human communication or from a digital source. Due to the increased use of advanced technology, more community members are staying informed through televised or social media (Gordon et al., 2013). These two forms of communication serve as primary conduits to relay information and to keep people informed of events affecting the world. Gordon et al. (2013) asserted that additional scholarship is necessary in social science that is relevant to human behavior to understand how and why individuals engage. In addition, Gordon et al. recommended further examination and exploration of social patterns of community members involved in civic matters. This study adds to the literature through Gordon et al.'s (2013) notion of trust, empowerment, and knowledge and action and exploring how they increase civic engagement. Therefore, exploring these behaviors provided a better understanding on how to use civic engagement to address and reduce the problems associated with the use and misuse of 911. I discuss the theory of civic engagement in more detail in Chapter 2.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory began as social learning theory (SLT) in the 1960s, and Bandura later developed it into SCT in 1986 (Boston University School of Public Health, 2016). Pajares (2002) wrote that instead of being reactive, in SCT, individuals appear as self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting, and self-regulating. The goal of SCT is to provide an understanding of how people regulate their behavior through control and reinforcement to achieve goal-directed behavior maintainable through time (Boston

University School of Public Health, 2016). Bandura developed six constructs, with the first five created as part of SLT: (a) reciprocal determinism, (b) behavioral capability, (c) observational learning, (d) reinforcements, and (e) expectations (Boston University School of Public Health, 2016, para. 3; Pajares, 2002). The sixth construct, self-efficacy, was part of SCT (Boston University School of Public Health, 2016, para. 3; Pajares, 2002). These six constructs appear in further detail in Chapter 2.

In SCT, the basis of human functioning is a dynamic interplay of personal, behavioral, and environmental influences (Pajares, 2002). These three dynamic relationships represent an interactive model called triadic reciprocality (Meaney, Housman, Cavazos, & Wilcox, 2012). Within the triadic reciprocality model, personal factors may include people's motivation, self-efficacy, knowledge, fear, and expected outcomes (Meaney et al., 2012). Furthermore, knowledge exists in three stages: (a) imposed, (b) selected, and (c) constructed (Meaney et al., 2012). The imposed environment refers to situations people must interact with each day, such as school, work, and family. The selected environment pertains to the choices people have in how they react to the imposed environmental factors. Their resulting behavior becomes their constructed environment, which requires that they participate in their surroundings. Meaney et al. (2012) noted that this participation often results in the attainment of new knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors.

Nature of the Study

In this phenomenological research study, I explored the perceptions of five community members in a county in the state of Georgia with regard to their perceptions

of civic engagement and 911 use. I collected data from in-depth semistructured

interviews that I designed. In this research study, I provide an understanding of

community members' knowledge and use of 911 and the components of civic

engagement present in community members.

I used face-to-face conversations and snowball sampling to recruit community

member participants. Community members who participated in the study met the

following selection criteria for this research study: (a) status as county residents, (b) age

of 18 years or older, and (c) use of 911 between 2012 and 2015. I transcribed the

interviews and used inductive coding to identify themes and codes in the interviews. The

study took place in accordance with the parameters established by Walden University's

Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the ethical protection of research participants.

Chapter 3 includes an extensive detailed review of the nature of the study.

Definition of Terms

I used the following terms in the study:

311: Three-digit nonemergency number used in the United States to request

public service and public safety for nonemergency situations (U.S. Department of Justice

COPS, 2008).

911: Three-digit emergency number used in the United States to request public

safety response (U.S. Department of Transportation [DOT], 2012).

911 communications system: A centralized system for dispatching public safety

agents in response to community members' request for emergency services (Hess, 2009).

Call taker: Communications center professional responsible for screening incoming and transferring outgoing 911 and nonemergency calls for service (Solomon & Uchida, 2003).

Civic affairs: Hauptmann (2005) noted, "The reference to 'civic' suggests that any kind of involvement in the affairs of government, politics, administration, or organizations could be regarded as civic engagement" (p. 5).

Civic engagement: Active involvement in the planning and process of activities affecting the quality of life in community affairs (Babbie, 2001; Hauptmann, 2005).

Community members: Individuals within a community who reside, work, and share resources and other communal affiliations that permit meaningful interactions (Gordon et al., 2013).

Emergency call: An incoming call requiring immediate dispatching of emergency public safety agents to respond to a threat of life or bodily injury (Solomon & Uchida, 2003).

Empowerment: A responsive action to identify strengths, competencies, and capabilities as opportunities to explore social problems and the desire to contribute to social change (Gordon et al. 2013; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

Knowledge and action: Codependent contributors needed to propel individuals' level of participation and commitment in civic and political affairs (Gordon et al., 2013).

Nonemergency call: An incoming call that involves no immediate threat to life or bodily injury and pertains to crimes already occurred (Solomon & Uchida, 2003).

Self-efficacy: To possess strengths, abilities, and skills to control actions of personal and societal events occurring or affecting an individual (Bandura, 1997).

Social modeling: Mirroring the positive behavior of successful, like-minded people (Bandura, 1997).

Trust: Operational practice of fairness by decision makers that serves as the communicative foundation between community members and decision makers (Gordon et al., 2013; Terwel et al., 2010).

Assumptions

Assumptions show the reason why a research problem exists and the need to conduct a research study (Babbie, 2001; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Neuman & Robson, 2009). Neuman (2003) noted that deductive reasoning in social science research follows a top-down approach to determine logical relationships by applying theory to support assumptions about a social phenomenon. As a result, social science researchers realize the existence of their assumptions as they conduct face-to-face interviews with research participants (Babbie, 2001). It is important for social science researchers exploring and examining a social phenomenon to identify the assumptions (Neuman & Robson, 2009). Therefore, I made the following assumptions in this study:

- Community members who participated in this research study would not be aware of the existing misuse of 911.

- Community members would not be aware of the 10-digit nonemergency number.

- The in-depth face-to-face interviews would be appropriate to explore why community members commonly misuse 911.

- Community member participants would not be engaged in civic matters.

- The three constructs of civic engagement would not be important to community members.

- Demographics would be a contributing factor to the use and misuse of 911.

- Community members would not fully understand the use and purpose of 911.

- The participants would answer all interview questions honestly and openly by sharing their perceptions about the questions asked.

- Similar local and state jurisdictions with 911 misuse problems might use the finding from this study.

- The results of this study would lead to positive social change.

Scope and Delimitations

The participants in this study included five community members in a county in the state of Georgia who used 911 between 2012 and 2015. To explore community members' perceptions of civic engagement and 911 use, I addressed three social constructs: trust, empowerment, and knowledge and action. I limited the boundaries of this study to the population from one county in the state of Georgia.

To prevent perceived coercion or manipulation within this study, I did not include anyone with whom I had a personal relationship, including family members, friends, coworkers, and professional associates. I asked participants to provide the names and contact information of additional individuals who fit the community member criteria to

begin snowball sampling. I excluded nonpermanent residents, visitors, tourists, and business owners who were not residents of the county used in this study.

Limitations

This research study included several limitations. The first limitation related to the demographic requirement needed to participate in the study. Participants needed to (a) be 18 years of age or older, (b) be a resident of the county used in the study, and (c) have used 911 for any reason between 2012 and 2015. This phenomenological study included five participants, and the results may be limited if applied beyond the demographic requirements used in this study. Considering the sample size was small, the findings may be generalizable to similar populations of county residents; however, the results of the study may not be generalizable to other county populations such as business owners, students, visitors, residents of other counties, and other community stakeholders. To increase the generalizability of future research, the sample could be larger and could be from multiple cities, counties, and states to gain further insight and understanding of community members' use of 911 in relation to their knowledge of 911 and civic engagement.

Another limitation related to the application of the civic engagement theory and the SCT; therefore, the application of other theories such as change theory and psychological empowerment theory is possible. Future studies involving the civic engagement phenomenon might result in the application of a different sampling strategy such as convenience sampling and a different data collection method such as a narrative.

With respect to the scope of conducting a phenomenological research study, social desirability bias was another possible limitation. Participants may want researchers to perceive them positively when responding to the interview questions of a study; therefore, participants may have not responded truthfully to the interview questions.

Significance of the Study

The focus of the research was on the lived experiences of community members' engagement in civic affairs and their knowledge and use of 911. Therefore, self-efficacy, empowerment, trust, and knowledge and action were focal points used to explore community members' perceptions of civic engagement and the ways their levels of each may affect civic involvement.

This research study represents an original contribution because its focus was on a novel angle of 911 misuse. The intended outcome of this research study is for public safety professionals to understand how citizens perceive 911, emergencies, and civic matters. The results of this study will provide an understanding of civic engagement and 911 use. Therefore, this study could provide implications for positive change with regard to (a) reducing the number of nonemergency calls to 911, (b) educating citizens about what type of situation warrants a call to 911, (c) reducing the number of police-dispatched calls for nonemergency purposes, and (d) increasing civic engagement.

Distribution of the results of this research study may provide a better understanding of the continued use and misuse of 911 for nonemergency problems. In addition, disseminating the results of this study will contribute to the body of knowledge

and will serve as a foundation to help public service administrators find a solution to reducing the number of nonemergency calls entering 911 communications centers.

Researchers have conducted a lot of empirical research on 311 effectiveness and 911 misuse; however, a review of literature indicated that researchers have not adequately addressed the experiences of community members engaged in civic affairs in relation to their knowledge and use of 911. In this study, I addressed the scope by exploring the perceptions of community members about civic engagement and 911 use. This research project adds to the literature by filling a gap in the literature on public safety and public services with respect to civic engagement and 911 use and misuse. Along with researchers in the public policy and administration field, researchers in a wide array of other fields might have an interest in the study's findings, including criminal justice, public health, public safety, and public service.

The implications for positive social change apply to public policy administrators and practitioners who implement service integration initiatives to improve quality of life and to provide public services. Public administrators and practitioners, such as public safety directors, police chiefs, communications directors, county commissioners, and city council members, may use the research findings to create policy objectives and practices that improve the nonemergency system by diverting nonemergency calls from busy 911 systems before, during, and after emergencies. This may help to ensure that first responders remain available to respond to situations that are life threatening.

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore the perceptions of five community members with regard to civic engagement and 911 use in a county in the state of Georgia. Civic engagement theory and the SCT served as theoretical frameworks for this phenomenological study. In-depth semistructured interviews were suitable for exploring the perceptions of community members. This research was necessary to provide a greater understanding of civic engagement and reducing 911 misuse. The results of the study add to the body of knowledge for public safety and public service administrators to find a solution to reduce 911 use for nonemergency problems.

Chapter 1 included the background of the problem, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, nature of the study, definitions of terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, significance of the study, and summary. Chapter 2 includes the literature search strategy; theoretical foundation; literature review of the 911 emergency communications system, 311 communications call centers, 10-digit nonemergency numbers, and community members; and a summary and conclusion. Chapter 3 includes the research design and rationale, research question, role of the researcher, methodology, threats of validity, issues of trustworthiness, and summary. Chapter 4 includes a discussion on the setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results, and summary. Chapter 5 includes the interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore five community members' perceptions regarding the experiences of community members who used 911 in relation to their knowledge of 911 and civic engagement in a county in the state of Georgia. Civic engagement refers to community members actively participating in public affairs to improve the quality of life within a community (Gordon et al., 2013; Hauptmann, 2005; Svara & Denhardt, 2010). Although problems exist in society, socioeconomically disadvantaged community members are less likely to participate in public affairs due to various components such as mistrust in decision makers, low self-efficacy, and lack of knowledge (Hill, Jobling, Pollet, & Nettle, 2014). To increase civic involvement, it is necessary for decision makers to be trustworthy and to establish effective and productive partnerships with community members (Hauptmann, 2005). Bandura (1997) asserted that self-efficacy and empowerment are key elements for individuals to feel motivated and committed and to become productive participants in society. Thus, self-efficacy is a conduit for knowledge and action, where individuals with high self-efficacy are overachievers, resilient, and driven (Bandura, 1997; Fredrickson, 1998; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). Researchers have not adequately addressed the social constructs of civic engagement and 911 use and misuse; therefore, this study addressed that gap. Chapter 2 includes the introduction, literature search strategy, and theoretical foundation, as well as information on U.S. policing, police agencies as open systems, 911 communications systems, 311 community call centers, 10-digit

nonemergency numbers, civic engagement, community and members and civic engagement. I conclude the chapter with a summary and conclusions.

Literature Search Strategy

The purpose of a literature review is to discover and review existing literature pertaining to the problem identified in a study (Babbie, 2001). Babbie (2001) reported that researchers review the literature to examine what other researchers have addressed regarding the research topic. In addition, Babbie (2001) noted that the goals of conducting a literature review are to apply a new theoretical lens to a topic area, discover a methodological design, find a new research study approach and new resources, and pinpoint where the literature is information rich. Thus, it is important for researchers to apply investigative skills and critically analyze various perspectives on the research topic.

An effective literature search strategy is a combination of web portals and traditional library searches (Staines, Johnson, & Bonacci, 2008). The literature search strategies for this research included a comprehensive search in Walden University Library databases, including EBSCOhost databases and ProQuest. Databases included Criminal Justice and Policy and Administration databases, SAGE Journals, and Oxford Bibliographies. The literature review consisted of locating sources related to the topic. I found various peer-reviewed journal articles using both technological and traditional sources. Walden University Library served as the main technological engine to retrieve peer-reviewed articles. Other sources reviewed included Dispatch Magazine Online, U.S. Department of Justice COP website, and 911.gov.

Key words and identifiers included *police 911*, *community policing*, *311*, *emergency American policing*, and *civic and citizen engagement*. By using these key identifiers, I was able to find relevant research sources. I used traditional sources, such as the Georgia Public Library Services Public Information Network for Electronic Services, to obtain publications on police administration and management, organizational change, and social science research and strategy. I retrieved information from relevant documents and incorporated it in the study.

Theoretical Foundation

Human inquiry in social science is an inquisitive state of knowing, understanding, and applying reasoning to why circumstances occur as the result of some form of action (Babbie, 2001). Theoretical lenses in social science capture various ways to look at the social world (Neuman & Robson, 2009). Researchers conduct social science research to apply logic and reasoning to understand the cause and effect of a social phenomenon and relevant behavior (Neuman & Robson, 2009). Moustakas (1994) asserted that a researcher can best understand a social phenomenon by exploring the knowledge and experience associated to the phenomenon. Thus, researchers gain knowledge through learning experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas indicated that social science researchers contributing to the discipline use self-evident knowledge to explore the lived experiences of others to validate their own understanding of the phenomenon. Therefore, social science theories serve to provide understanding and reasoning to a social phenomenon. Theory, data collection, and data analysis are three components used to build the foundation of social science research to help researchers determine, understand,

and interpret new meaning to a social phenomenon (Babbie, 2001). Researchers use a

theory to explain and provide a synopsis of a logical notion (Myers, 2005). Gordon et

al.'s (2013) civic engagement theory and Bandura's (1986) SCT served as the theoretical

foundation for this study. This section includes subsections on civic engagement theory

and SCT.

Civic Engagement Theory

In this subsection, I discuss the theoretical propositions of Gordon et al.'s (2013)

civic engagement theory. In addition, I discuss how researchers have applied the theory

in ways similar to this study. This subsection includes subsections on theory and the

research application of civic engagement theory.

Theory. Civic engagement pertains to the ways people attend to public life

concerns and how they learn about and participate in the issues and the contexts beyond

their immediate private or intimate sphere (Gordon et al., 2013). Gordon et al. (2013)

highlighted that the basis of civic engagement is three individual and collective actions.

The first action is the ability to gain and process information that is important to creating

opinions about civic matters. The second action is the ability to express and debate

opinions and beliefs related to civic life within communities. The third action is the

ability to take action in collaboration with social institutions or individuals may have

tension with some social institutions, which may include community groups,

corporations, governments, or political parties.

Civic engagement includes three main perspectives: (a) trust, (b) empowerment,

and (c) knowledge and action (Gordon et al., 2013). With regard to trust, individuals have

to first trust in the group to engage meaningfully in civic life. The role of trust in civic

engagement is the most important, as individuals assess the fairness of decision outcomes

or decision-making processes. Depending on the decision-making process used,

individuals will assume the trustworthiness of decision-making institutions (Terwel et al.,

2010). In addition, Terwel et al.'s findings indicated that group decision-making

procedures may be more trustworthy when there exists a means by which individuals can

voice their opinions in the decision-making process. Hence, the perception of trust in a

decision-making entity results in individuals being more likely to stay a member of the

group and being more willing to help the group (Tyler, Degoey, & Smith, 1996).

  Empowerment, or political efficacy, is a central component of civic engagement

(Gordon et al., 2013). From a community psychology viewpoint, the differences between

three main levels of empowerment (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman, 1990)

capture the main interactions that occur in civic life, such as those among peers and

between individual and the institution (Gordon et al., 2013, p. 10):

1. Individual empowerment: This level of empowerment appears in participatory

   behavior, perceived self-efficacy, and engagement motivations.

2. Organizational empowerment: First, this level of empowerment includes

   empowering organizations, where the organizational structure and processes

   increase people's skills and create the mutual support and feedback required

   to establish change at the community level. Second, this level of

   empowerment includes empowered organizations where organizations are

   able to compete effectively for resources and interact with other organizations.

3. Community level empowerment: This level of empowerment pertains to

people cooperating to improve their collective lives and the relationships

between the community organizations that sustain their quality of life.

Empowerment is a means to an outcome and is an outcome (Gordon et al., 2013).

Empowering processes allow people to perceive that they have control over what comes

next, so that they can successfully shape the decisions that affect them, which results in

empowered outcomes (Zimmerman, 1990). Gordon et al. (2013) noted that empowered

outcomes provide the measurement of success for empowering processes and platforms.

Gordon et al. (2013) also discussed political efficacy, which Roberts (2004) described as

believing that individual political action can or does have an effect on the political

process and that it is meaningful for individuals to take part in civic duties. Roberts noted

that efficacy pertains to believing each individual plays an important part in effecting

change.

Empowerment as political efficacy includes two categories: internal efficacy and

external efficacy (Jung, Kim, & de Zuniga, 2011; Kenski & Stroud, 2006). Internal

efficacy pertains to people's belief in their cognitive ability to comprehend and

willingness to participate in civic processes effectively. Researchers such as Valentino,

Gregorowicz, and Groendyk (2008) suggested that external social factors influence

efficacy due to environmental dynamics and natural settings.

An interconnection exists between political knowledge and action (Gordon et al.,

2013). Gordon et al. (2013) noted that knowledge is the driving force for political

participation, and staying informed is a way to participate in civic life. Through

meaningful action, knowledge can further develop (Gordon et al., 2013). By gaining knowledge through the media, individuals increase their awareness of civic issues and their likelihood of political participation (Chafee, Zhao, & Leshner, 1994; Eveland & Scheufele, 2000; Kaid, McKinney, & Tedesco, 2007; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Sotirovic & McLeod, 2001).

Research application of civic engagement theory. Research on the application of Gordon et al.'s (2013) civic engagement theory to community members' knowledge of 911 and civic engagement is lacking. Using Foucault's (1988) work on care of the self, Kou (2016) investigated how Weibo users in China cultivated their own knowledge through civic participation. Kou noted the important role that information and communication technologies play in civic participation. Kou discussed Gordon et al.'s perspective that information and communication technologies help individuals obtain and process information, express and debate opinions and beliefs, and take action. Findings from Kou's study indicated that each location explored in the study had its own unique form of civic participation embedded in local circumstances. Thus, Kou recommended that civic computing researchers pay particular attention to local conditions, such as when they study foreign events.

Social Cognitive Theory

In this subsection, I discuss the theoretical propositions of Bandura's (1986) SCT. In addition, I discuss how researchers have applied the theory in ways similar to this study. This subsection includes discussions on theory and the research application of SCT.

Theory. Social cognitive theory originally began as SLT in the 1960s, and

Bandura developed SLT into SCT in 1986 (Boston University School of Public Health,

2016). In the 1970s, Bandura became aware that an important factor was missing from

learning theories, including his own SLT (Pajares, 2002). In 1977, Bandura identified the

missing element, self-belief, when he published *Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory*

of Behavioral Change (Pajares, 2002). In 1986, Bandura published *Social Foundations of*

Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory, which advanced a view of human

functioning giving a central role to cognitive, vicarious, self-regulatory, and self-

reflective processes in human adaptation and change (Pajares, 2002). Pajares (2002)

related that instead of being reactive, individuals in SCT are self-organizing, proactive,

self-reflecting, and self-regulating. Hence, Pajares (2002) noted that in Bandura's SCT,

the basis of human functioning is a dynamic interplay of influences referred to as

reciprocal determinism: personal, behavioral, and environmental. For instance,

individuals' interpretation of their own behavior informs and changes their environments,

as well as the personal factors they possess, which then inform and change successive

behaviors. Pajares (2002) noted that successive change of behavior is the foundation of

Bandura's reciprocal determinism or triadic reciprocity. Therefore, Bandura changed his

theory from SLT to SCT to distance his theory from other SLTs and to highlight that

cognition plays a major role in people's capability to construct reality, self-regulate,

encode information, and perform behaviors.

The goal of SCT is to provide an understanding of how people regulate their

behavior using control and reinforcement to achieve goal-directed behavior maintainable

through time (Boston University School of Public Health, 2016). The six constructs

developed by Bandura included the five created as part of SLT and self-efficacy, added

later as a part of SCT (Boston University School of Public Health, 2016, para. 3; Pajares,

2002):

1. Reciprocal determinism: This construct is central to SCT and includes a focus

   on triadic reciprocality as a means to interconnect an individual to personal

   factors such as cognition and biological occurrences; behavioral

   characteristics such as a stimulus of aspirations and achievements; and

   environmental factors such as social affiliations and context.

2. Behavioral capability: The focus of this construct is on individuals' ability to

   apply the behavioral characteristics necessary to adapt or to alter to their

   environment. This ability develops through knowledge, skill, and action, and

   it is important to identify the outcome as a learning capability and

   environmental application.

3. Observational learning: Within this construct, individuals discover, interpret,

   and understand observed behavior, which can lead to mirroring learned

   behavior.

4. Reinforcements: This construct serves as the main conduit between behavior

   and environment. Internal and external responses dictate whether the

   individual will indulge or deny the behavior. Individuals will assess positive

   or negative reinforcements as determining factors to continue or cease

behavior, and the environment might self-initiate or influence these reinforcements.

5. Expectations: The focus of this construct is on outcome expectations (OEs) which are assessed or predicted prior to an individual engaging in a particular behavior. The OEs or consequences serve as contributing factors to whether the individual will complete the anticipated behavior.

6. Self-efficacy: The focus of this construct is an individual's confidence level and ability to perform a behavior. Cognition and other learning capabilities, along with personal, behavioral, and environmental factors, are driving forces for an individual to achieve self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is a major construct of SCT (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is the effectiveness of an individual as determined by self-motivation, self-understanding, self-confidence, personalized goals, and social perspectives (Bandura, 1997). In addition, self-efficacy includes motivation, cognitive skills, mood, and affect (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1977) noted individuals with high expectations and personalized goals exhibit high levels of self-efficacy, which plays a pivotal role in how they manage stress and cope with difficult situations. Bandura also noted individuals with low self-effectiveness are unmotivated, often avoid challenges, and lack stress management and coping skills.

Self-efficacy is a pivotal component in civic engagement. Bandura (1997) discussed a systems plan or action plan that provides individuals with more control for expected or unexpected events. Bandura indicated that control results in action, which equates to effectiveness, and the action plan gives individuals control over events.

Bandura also claimed that self-perception triggers four major components of human behavior: cognitive, motivation, mood, and affect. Bandura reported that persistence, ambition, and optimism are motivational qualities found in people with high self-efficacy. For that reason, individuals with high self-efficacy feel driven and committed to be successful and productive citizens. Resilient people tend to progress up the social, personal, and professional ladder of success to achieve their goals. Instead of avoiding obstacles and accepting setbacks, goal-oriented people make adjustments at each level as needed to move forward and achieve their desired goal (Bandura, 1997; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). The concepts of adapt and overcome are helpful when faced with setbacks and adversity (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003).

Coping skills, stress management, and mental stability drive people's mood and affect (Bandura, 1997). Mentally stable individuals possess the ability to cope during and after stressful events (Bandura, 1997). Hence, high self-efficacy people have a greater sense of pride in different aspects of life and want to succeed and promote change within themselves and in the world (Bandura, 1997). Individuals with low self-efficacy tend to lack coping skills to manage stress and anxiety (Bandura, 1997; Fredrickson, 1998). In addition, they may have a low tolerance for change and commitment, as well as deficiencies in social relationships (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1997) related that social modeling and social persuasion can help to accomplish personal efficacy. When people surround themselves with positive and motivated people, they are more likely to be willing to engage in social activities (Bandura, 1997; Fredrickson, 1987). Gordon et al.'s (2013) civic engagement theory has a connection to Bandura's SCT. When civic

engagement exists in communities, community members may learn from the behavior and are likely to participate in civic matters that affect their communities.

Research application of social cognitive theory. Attention on civic engagement among young people has increased (Chung & Probert, 2011). Using SCT as the theoretical foundation, Chung and Probert (2011) examined the relationship between OEs and two civic outcomes: volunteering and political activism. Bandura's (1986) definition of OEs was as follows: "The results or desired outcomes of intentional actions in which an individual chooses to engage" (p. 6). Chung and Probert (2011) used 129 African American young adults between 18 and 25 years of age, who lived in a disadvantaged neighborhood in Trenton, New Jersey. The participants participated in a 60-minute face-to-face interview. Findings indicated that OEs represented a type of civic attitude that may provide insight into why young adults get involved in civic activities. Chung and Probert (2011) also found that young adults participate more often in volunteering than in political activism. Consistent with their hypotheses, Chung and Probert (2011) found that OEs related to multiple dimensions of individuals' lived experiences and that young adults who perceived higher levels of community functioning were more likely to believe that political actions could result in positive community outcomes. Finding supported Bandura's (1986) argument that people develop OEs based on outcomes that result from their own actions, observations of situations, and events in their environment. In addition, Chung and Probert (2011) found that young adults who have positive OEs were more likely to participate in future political actions.

Service learning, a teaching technique, serves to bridge academic study and civic engagement (Meaney et al., 2012). Service-learning techniques serve as a conduit for students to engage in purposeful community service related to their academic discipline (Meaney et al., 2012). Using Bandura's (1986, 1999) SCT as the theoretical framework, Meaney et al. (2012) explored the effects of service learning on 16 graduate physical education teacher education students enrolled in a Department of Health and Human Performance's instruction and curriculum physical education located at a university in the southwestern United States. Students worked in teams to plan, implement, and assess physical activity lessons for children 5 to 12 years of age. Physical activity instruction took place through the Family Fun and Fit (FFF) service-learning program, which was a collaborative project supported by the university and the local elementary school.

Based on Bandura's SCT, Meaney et al. (2012) examined the interaction of students' personal factors, such as self-efficacy and knowledge, and the environment, such as teaching physical activity to low-income minority children, on graduate preservice educators' behaviors, such as teaching techniques and strategies (Meaney et al., 2012). Findings indicated that graduate students obtained many benefits from their participation in the FFF service-learning program. As a result, 82% of graduate students who participated in the FFF strengthened their physical education capabilities and positively affected their self-efficacy and knowledge, 68% reported that FFF participation provided many opportunities to implement different teaching techniques, and 75% related that they encountered a mind-altering experience of stereotypes placed on children living in low-income communities (Meaney et al., 2012). Based on the findings, Meaney et al.

noted the FFF setting enabled graduate students to work with and through their emotions so they could create developmentally appropriate physical activity lessons for children.

American Policing

American policing authority and power originated from the legislative and executive branches of the U.S. government (Swanson, Territo, & Taylor, 2008). Protection, public service, and preserving peace and security are the core fundaments of American policing (Swanson et al., 2008). American policing initially followed an independent form of operation that consisted less of government interaction. As politics became part of policing, American policing goals changed to reflect a political platform (Swanson et al., 2008). For instance, during the 1860s, American cities governed by political leaders developed partnerships with the police community (Swanson et al., 2008). In New York, aldermen or city councilmen were the leading governing authority for hiring and approving police personnel. Contrary to the initial responsibility of police officers protecting and serving community members, aldermen demanded that police officers engage in corrupt behavior or scare tactics to increase political favor in the community. At the end of the 19th century, city mayors replaced the aldermen system of city government, police officers' roles shifted back to protecting and serving the entire community, and leaders removed corrupt police officers from the force (Swanson et al., 2008).

During the reformation era from 1900 to 1926, there was a desire to implement changes in American policing administration and politics (Kucukuysal & Beyhan, 2011). In 1906, New York was the first to have police activities separate from politics, which

gave rise to the city management movement (Swanson et al., 2008). Swanson et al.

(2008) reported that to help drive the city management movement, New York leaders

implemented the first public service training school to educate police officers about

police administration in 1911. Key objectives of public service training schools were to

train police officers to better serve the community, eradicate corruption in government,

and remove politics from policing (Swanson et al., 2008). Traditional policing included

protecting and serving the entire community. However, Swanson et al. (2008) related that

the traditional reactive policing efforts used during the 1970s and 1980s to deter criminal

activity that plagued urban communities failed to curb rising crime rates. Due to failed

efforts to lower crime rates, Swanson et al. (2008) noted that community-oriented

policing served as the new platform of American policing.

Community-oriented policing is a proactive and collaborative effort to deter

criminal activity, improve police–community relations, and increase the involvement of

the community in police and community affairs (McCampbell, 2011; Scheider, Spence,

& Mansourian, 2012; Schneider, 2003). Swanson et al. (2008) related that in comparing

traditional and community policing styles, the focus of current American policing is on

protecting and serving while placing emphasis on effective community partnerships to

engage community members in crime prevention and safety awareness strategies.

Swanson et al. noted that the shift in American policing led police to increase their role

and responsibility to serve the public in criminal and noncriminal capacities. As a result,

community members have come to rely on the police to assist with all social matters such

as social disorder and civil matters (iCERT, 2011; Sampson, 2002; Swanson et al., 2008).

The creation of the 911 communications systems was a factor in the shift from traditional to a community-oriented policing style (U.S. Department of Justice COPS, 2008). The U.S. Department of Justice COPS (2008) noted that with this system, demands from community members for police to address and handle various levels of community concerns and to mediate and solve all types of community affairs has led to increased police responsibilities. As the need for police officers to solve community problems increased, community members have demanded police services to be available as soon as demanded. However, this perception places a strain on community-oriented policing methods, civic engagement, emergency communications center practices, police calls for service, and proactive policing strategies (iCERT, 2011).

Police Agencies Are Open Systems

Public service organizations are open systems that function from internal and external components. According to Katz and Kahn (1978), organizational open systems describe the functionality of organizations and how they respond to social phenomena. The process of input, throughput, and output are essential in determining organizations as open systems (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Developing and understanding the organizational structure helps to describe the dynamics of the organization and how internal members contribute to essential daily operations. Depending on the structure of the organization, Katz and Kahn developed ways to help leaders identify the current stage of their organization. Leaders should assess their organization according to their current stage to associate it to one of the following stages: (a) primitive, (b) stable, or (c) elaborative (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Not all organizations need to enter the primitive stage, so

organizations need assessing according to their current state of operations (Katz & Kahn, 1978). After the identification process is complete, applying open systems triggers the input, throughput, and output of sources. Due to the nature of public safety and public service organizations, opens systems best characterize these organizations. Public safety and public service organizations follow the input process of seeking information from internal and external factors. After the importation of information is complete, the transformation process is the beginning of the analysis stage, which leads to the output of sources to organizations' environmental components.

Findings from this research study may lead to positive social change in 911 communications systems and in the ways community members perceive the purpose of the 911 call system. To address the problems with 911 misuse, studying the public safety arena was relevant. Katz and Kahn (1978) noted the organizational environment affects every open system organization; hence, it is important for organizational leaders to make necessary changes to adapt to changing environments. The change process consists of a three-stage course of action plan that includes unfreezing, moving, and refreezing. The organizational leaders use the change process to gain balance in their environment. Therefore, the importance of understanding the problems of a social phenomenon is to study the relevant social science field (Lewin, 1947).

Organizational and community problems require a thorough assessment for a resolution. Leaders of public service organizations should employ an organizational strategy to address internal and external problem areas (Kucukuysal & Beyhan, 2011). Assessing public safety community policing operations is a relevant strategy that entails

collaborative efforts from community members and public safety officials and allows for

the development of shared ideas to find a resolution to community problems, which

serves as an effective approach to assessing an organization's environment to resolve

issues (Kucukuysal & Beyhan, 2011). Public safety and public service organization

members thrive from their environment; hence, assessments through the input and

unfreezing process help to determine the effectiveness of services provided to their

environment. Thus, the nature of public service organizations' environments depends on

organizational structure. There is not a universal fit for public safety and community

needs, which results in leaders of public service organizations relying on the concept of

open systems to identify the relationship between organizational members and their

environment.

Organizational open systems require a high level of interdependency of input,

throughput, and output from internal and external members of their environment (Katz &

Kahn, 1978). Open systems is the means to identifying problems with an organization by

investigating and understanding organizational and societal dynamics (Etzioni, 1968;

Katz & Kahn, 1966). Hence, informational input equips leaders of organizations to revise

policies and to change current practices (Etzioni, 1968; Katz & Kahn, 1966). According

to Borkowski (2009), Katz and Kahn developed a framework for open systems

organizations in 1978 to find the best practice to fulfill organizational missions.

Borkowski (2009) noted that organizations apply the following four phases: (a)

inputs into the organization, (b) the transformation of those inputs within the system, (c)

outputs, and (d) recycling. Borkowski defined an organization as "a group of people

working together under a defined structure for the purpose of achieving stated goals

through coordinated activities" (p. 394), which requires human, material, and financial

resources. Bokowski indicated that organizational leaders must be able to obtain the

necessary input resources such as employees, materials and supplies, and capital from

their environment and efficiently transform the resources to outputs or goals. Hickman

(2010) noted that outputs provide another external resource, such as money, so that

organizations can again acquire the required input resources.

Open system organizational leaders seek internal and external interactions with

their environment, which frequently occurs in public service organizations (Swanson et

al., 2008). According to Swanson et al. (2008), internal elements assist in the process of

importing pertinent organizational information. These organizational elements include

internal actors such as employees and internal resources such as money. Organizations'

external actors include consumers, citizens, or other individuals outside of the

organization (Hickman, 2010; Katz & Kahn, 1978). External resources include

constituent collaboration and support, which may be monetary donations, compliance, or

social control and order (Etzioni, 1968; Swanson et al., 2008). The leaders of

organizations as open systems seek organizational success and thrive to be efficient and

effective (Etzioni, 1968; Swanson et al., 2008). Martz (2013) related that leaders of

organizations achieve organizational success from conducting organizational assessments

and performance evaluations of products and services. Information is power in open

system organizations. The existence of internal informational input causes positive

energy in an organization. The infusion of these elements catapults an organization to organizational success (Hickman, 2010; Swanson et al., 2008).

The input transformations undergo assessments to obtain information from internal and external societal actors, thus contributing to the functionality of the organization (Hickman, 2010; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Swanson et al, 2008). Swanson et al. (2008) related that productivity assessments are essential organizational functions that ensure public safety organizations maintain daily operations. As a result, productivity assessments take place on employees, community members, other societal units, policies and procedures, and budgetary resources to measure organizational performance through conducting assessments (Martz, 2013). With regard to public safety organizations, employees and community members have vital roles in the effectiveness of public safety services rendered and received (Martz, 2013). In public safety, this level of interaction and interdependency is necessary to examine, understand, and evaluate problems within an organization (Katz & Kahn, 1978), which leads to assessing public safety organizational interdependency's effectiveness through a careful examination of common objectives to determine whether fulfillment occurs (Martz, 2013; Swanson et al., 2008).

The basis of input and output dynamics is what goes in must undergo a process to come out, and in open systems, this refers to the throughput function (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Swanson et al., 2008). The throughput function acknowledges transactions between the organization and its environment (Martz, 2013). As assessments and evaluations are complete, the output process consists of identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT; Hickman, 2010). The SWOT analysis provides a better

understanding of organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
identified from internal and external environments, actors, and sources (Hickman, 2010).
Public safety organizations benefit from exporting information gathered from internal and
external components, and as a result, products and services are effective and more
efficient (Swanson et al., 2008).

Organizations must produce outputs that the external environment needs and
values (Borkowski, 2009). According to Swanson et al. (2008), open systems often exist
in modern day public safety organizations. Public safety daily operations consist of
public safety practitioners interacting with their environment, such as 911 call takers and
community members. This level of interaction permits community members to request
emergency responders come to their location for assistance. Swanson et al. indicated that
as community members request police services, the output of services persists, and the
open systems cycle continues, thus allowing police organizations and communications
systems to operate. To ensure services provided to community members are operational
and functional, understanding the perceptions of 911 call takers and community members
is necessary, which is one benefit of an open systems organization. As a result, leaders of
public service organizations are able to identify problems and find solutions.

After the process of input, throughput, and output is complete, organizational
leaders use the information to represent and render products and services. Swanson et al.
(2008) reported that this recycling procedure reinforces organizational mission and goals
and provides improved services. For instance, Swanson et al. noted that the primary
operation of public safety organizations is to provide public safety services to the public.

The mission is the same, as change and adaptation of public services needed to provide effective and efficient services to the environment.

The implementation of a strategic plan helps organizational leaders to address and resolve problems in a systemic manner (Lewin, 1947). Lewin (1947) asserted that effective problem solving and organizational change occur during a three-cycle change: (a) unfreezing, (b) moving, and (c) refreezing. The first step is unfreezing the current level to move to the next performance level, and after achieving the desired performance level, it freezes. After the change process is complete, organizations can operate with a new set of organizational values, policies, practices, and procedures. Bueermann (2012) asserted that police agencies needed to prepare for future policing by applying mechanisms of change. Bueermann recognized change as a systematic approach that consists of testing, assessing, and transforming existing policies, practices, and procedures to adapt to changing environments.

As policing styles and strategies changed, police organizations fell behind in ensuring new public safety community members have the necessary communicative skills that align to the new era of technology and the community-oriented policing philosophy (Skinner, 2012). Skinner (2012) related that this change in policing caused a large gap in transition and that prior to modern policing, police officers engaged in the community, as they knew community members, business owners, and other aspects of the community; therefore, they used proactive policing methods such as walking the beat or foot patrol. Skinner (2012) noted that technology use now limits the time police officers engage in community relations. Police departments were not ready to handle the overwhelming

demands of the public, which resulted in an alarming number of calls to emergency communications centers for police services (Bueermann, 2012; Skinner, 2012). This change in policing styles forced public safety organizations to adapt quickly to the 911 emergency communications system, which strained police–community relations (Skinner, 2012). Using the 911 emergency communications system resulted in community members' dependency on immediate and rapid responses for police services (Burack, 2012; Skinner, 2012). Public safety organizations are most effective when their leaders understand how well their organization can adapt to changes in the environment and provide valuable service to community members. I explored the perceptions of community members, which helped to identify reasons for 911 misuse, and used this information to identify possible ways to solve the problem. Leaders of public safety organizations must help their organizations adapt to the concept of change to provide better services to community members.

Formal organizations are open systems, and the organizations' members use institutional values and objectives outlined in the organization's mission statement. An organization's purpose appears in the organization's mission statement (Bryson, 2011). Bryson (2011) reported that policies, procedures, and practices center on the mission statement. Based on this theory, police operational practices flourish due to the organizational structure, culture, and rules that allow members of police organizations to provide protective services and peace to the public (Crank, 2003).

Organizational success is dependent on maintaining a productive and efficient environment (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Meyer and Rowan (1977) related that institutional

structure combined with activities produce a functional, successful environment that allows for the production of outputs. Thus, the input and output dynamics are pertinent in institutional success, where inputs generate information from the environment. Institutional managers assess and evaluate the information for the output of activities. This process is necessary to achieve organizational success; therefore, exploring the perceptions of community members was necessary to identify effective ways to reduce 911 misuse and abuse.

Contingency management is suitable for identifying organizational needs, and different types of structures are necessary to control their activities, which allows them to adapt and react to changes and uncertainties in the environment (Burns & Stalker, 1961). Burns and Stalker (1961) discussed two types of organizational structures: (a) organic and (b) mechanistic. The leaders of organizations that face dynamic and uncertain environments may have to develop and maintain an organic organizational structure because organic structures can process and distribute information and knowledge faster within the organization, which results in an increased ability to respond or react to changes in the environment (Burns & Stalker, 1961). Leaders of organizations operating in a stable environment may benefit from developing and maintaining a mechanistic organizational structure because companies that operate in a stable environment may not need to make decisions quickly. Burns and Stalker (1961) also noted that leaders may formalize or centralize many of the everyday decisions and operating procedures, as there is no inherent need for constant change and innovation.

Community-oriented policing is a proactive approach that serves to bridge the gap between the police and the community to increase civic engagement (Swanson et al., 2008). To use findings from this research to influence change in public safety agencies with existing 911 communications system problems surrounding the misuse and abuse of 911 for nonemergency calls, public safety administrators may need to assess current 911 communications system practices. After the problem emerges, public safety administrators will benefit from taking advantage of the open systems platform to assist with achieving organizational effectiveness. The goal is to guide administrators with understanding the importance of the organization mission and ways to accomplish goals to make services rendered to community members effective and efficient.

Leaders of police agencies should prepare for an uncertain future through the application of organization developmental strategies needed to fulfill future organizational goals and objectives (Bueermann, 2012). According to Bryson (2011), organizations thrive from the implementation and enforcement of an organizational mission statement. Frazier (2012) related that as policing practices advance into the future and leaders of police agencies have fully embedded the community policing philosophy into daily organizational practices, it is important to focus on strategic civic engagement strategies to enhance and motivate community members to increase their engagement in the decision-making process of activities and events that affect their communities. Embracing change is the key element in organizational success, especially when a great level of dependency exists on the public safety service community. Bueermann (2012) noted that as police agencies undergo internal changes in

organizational structure and development and with external factors such as community members, leaders of police organizations will need to learn how to embrace change at various levels.

To understand the nature of the problems between public service organizational members and their environment, it was important to explore the perceptions of external actors such as community members. Exploring 911 misuse was pertinent to evaluating how external organizational actors respond to their environment. Therefore, exploring the perceptions of community members about 911 misuse for nonemergency problems was necessary.

911 Emergency Communications Systems

In 1967, the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice recognized the need for a universal number for help that community members could use to report and request emergency police assistance (NENA, 2014). Therefore, in late 1967, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) collaborated with the American Telephone and Telegraph Company to establish a number for a fast and direct way for community members to request emergency assistance (NENA, 2014). In 1968, 911 became the universal number for help throughout the United States, and Congress supported the 911 assignment.

The 911 number was suitable because people could easily remember three digits during an emergency (NENA, 2014). Shortly after 911 became the universal number for help, leaders in Haleyville, Alabama, became the first to implement 911, and leaders in Nome, Alaska, followed shortly afterward (NENA, 2014). Five years after the inception

of 911, the White House's Office of Telecommunications created a policy statement addressing the beneficial features of 911 and its supporting platform and directed the Federal Information Center to help direct and guide governmental entities with planning and implementing 911 call systems (NENA, 2014).

As 911 became the universal number for help, increased usage led to developing advanced 911 features (e.g., enhanced 911 [E911]) to serve community members better and to trunk calls effectively (NENA, 2014). Trunking calls allows multiple phones lines to one call center, which increases accessibility for incoming calls (NENA, 2014). By the end of 1976, 911 use had rapidly increased to 17% of the U.S. population (NENA, 2014). In 1979, nine states had 911, and the servicing population increased to 26%. The 911 system increased by about 70 systems each year, and by 1987, 911 was available to 50% of the U.S. population. By 1999, 911 was available to 93% of the U.S. population and the majority of that portion was the E911 system.

As the United States entered the 21st century, E911 technological advances allowed the public to have access conveniently and quickly through mobile electronics (U.S. DOT, 2013). Cell phones and wireless technology had become readily available to the public (U.S. DOT, 2013). The Wireless Communications and Public Safety Act of 1999 embraced the need for a new level of technological advancement. The focus of the act was on the growing demand to meet the needs of internal and external components of the electronic infrastructure. The newfound communications infrastructure required governmental entities to collaborate and coordinate with other state and local agencies

and adopt a program to provide statewide emergency telecommunications effectively, efficiently, and rapidly at all public safety levels (U.S. DOT, 2013).

As 911 gained popularity as the universal emergency number for help, new emergency centers helped to manage the load of 911 calls (Hess, 2009; Thibault, Lynch, & McBride, 2011). To assist with the influx of calls to 911 call centers, the computer-aided dispatch system connected callers swiftly to police personnel (Hess, 2009; Thibault et al., 2011).The ultimate goal of the computer-aided dispatch system is to dispatch patrol cars to public service requests for police aid (Hess, 2009; Thibault et al., 2011). The majority of public safety agencies rely on the computer-aided dispatch and 911 communication systems as a dual resource tool to manage and monitor incoming calls to 911 call centers (Hess, 2009; Solomon & Uchida, 2003).

311 Community Call Centers

In 1996, the U.S. Department of Justice COPS first identified 911 misuse (U.S. Department of Justice COPS, 2008). During this time, leaders at the U.S. Department of Justice COPS recognized the need to divert nonemergency calls from 911 and requested FCC to reserve 311 as the primary nonemergency number. The purpose of 311 was to relieve 911 of nonemergency incoming calls. Therefore, in 1997, the FCC approved the request and reserved 311 as the national nonemergency number (Allen, 2013; Solomon & Uchida, 2003; U.S. Department of Justice COPS, 2008). Since its inception, 56 cities and counties across the United States launched 311 and other nonemergency numbers to alleviate and minimize 911 misuse (Famega, Frank, & Mazerolle, 2005).

Leaders at the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) were the first to implement and launch 311 (Allen, 2013). According to Allen (2013), city managers and BPD officials endorsed the 311 system to help reduce the number of nonemergency calls entering 911. Prior to 311, BPD top officials reported that 60% of calls to 911 were nonemergency incidents, which burdened the 911 call center and communications center personnel. The 311 system was immediately effective, and the BPD experienced a significant decrease in calls to 911. Allen (2013) noted that the drop in 911 calls was due to routing nonemergency calls to the proper department when individuals call 311.

10-Digit Nonemergency Numbers

Public safety organization leaders created nonemergency numbers to decrease the number of nonemergency calls from entering 911 communications centers. Other nonemergency three-digit numbers such as 311 helped to alleviate the overwhelming number of nonemergency calls to 911. Researchers found that using 311 as an alternative approach was costly (Holmes, 2007; Sampson, 2004). Many public safety agencies are not financially able to fund a 311 system, but 10-digit nonemergency numbers are a cost-effective method to remedy 911 misuse (Holmes, 2007; Sampson, 2004). Community members might not use 10-digit nonemergency numbers as frequently, which could be because of a lack of public education about 10-digit nonemergency numbers or the length of the 10-digit number. In 2009, leaders in Saginaw, Michigan, terminated the 311 system because it failed to alleviate nonemergency calls to 911 (Rau, 2009). Rau (2009) also reported community members did not grasp the 311 system and it was not popular in the community.

Civic Engagement

Svara and Denhardt (2010) reported that the problem with civic engagement is that people do not engage until a negative event, action, or activity affects them personally or as a community, which leads to a sense of enragement instead of engagement. Thus, the underlying problem involves the allotted action government leaders can take to find a resolution to increase civic engagement (Svara & Denhardt, 2010). Svara and Denhardt (2010) noted several assumptions based on possible approaches to increase civic engagement. The first assumption was government entities possess the ability to organize operations to engage community members. The second assumption was government officials adopt methods to employ more attention to local community activities from outside sources. The third assumption was that government actors use community organizers to reach a diverse group of community stakeholders and the government should rely on digital technology.

The civic engagement platform should help to keep community members engaged in community affairs, quality-of-life matters, and public administration (McCampbell, 2011; Ohmer, 2010; Yang & Pandey, 2011). Therefore, civic engagement refers to community members having a sense of community spirit, pride, responsibility, and commitment to matters positively and negatively affecting their community (Ohmer, 2010). Ohmer (2010) also reported that civic engagement is the active involvement of individuals in organizational affairs affecting the community. The goal of civic engagement is to identify problematic areas in organizations and communities and find a resolution. Hauptmann (2005) noted that organizations and community members have

collaborative responsibility to achieve organizational and community goals to increase

the quality of life. According to Yang and Pandey (2011), organizational success is

contingent to civic involvement and 311 is partially credited to the achievement of civic

engagement. Phelan (2010) conducted a case study on a 311 system and civic

engagement in Cupertino, California, and found that one purpose of civic engagement is

to eliminate communications barriers and to create meaningful partnerships between

public service administrators and community members.

Community Members and Civic Engagement

Local governments can be active contributors to meaningful citizen engagement

through partnership (Svara & Denhardt, 2010). This section includes the following

subsections: motivated factors to use 911; experience and use of 311; experience with

nonemergency numbers; 911 and emergencies; motivational factors to engage in civic

affairs; civic engagement and trust; and trust, empowerment, and knowledge and action

in public safety service.

Motivated Factors to Use 911

Community members use digital technology to connect and communicate in local

affairs (Bryer, 2010). This level of self-identification defines community members' role

in society and their connection to being productive community members (Bryer, 2010).

Bryer (2010) noted that professional and personal lifestyles dictate the level of

involvement community members have in their community. With regard to community

involvement, Smith (2010) found that technology was a leading contributor to keeping

community members engaged and linking members to governmental services or to

government officials. In addition, findings indicated that community members with postsecondary degrees or those who were financially affluent were more likely to be knowledgeable of government products and services through digital technology. With the use of digital technology, findings showed that community members were most likely connected to the government entities by viewing websites, reading government blogs, watching informative videos, receiving e-mail or text notifications, or following Twitter.

Civic engagement involves individuals' active involvement in organizations' affairs, such as setting and working to achieve organizational goals while they express their personal goals and strive for identifiable results (Hauptmann, 2005). Hauptmann (2005) noted that the purpose of civic engagement is to increase community awareness and engagement in community affairs. Hauptmann's theory of civic engagement consists of both micro and macro levels of involvement. The macro level follows a top-down approach to managing the needs of community members. This less democratic approach is how politicians, city managers, and top government officials determine what is best for community members. The micro level is on the opposite end of the spectrum. Hauptmann (2005) related that the fundamental purpose of civic engagement is not complete when community members fail to play an active role in community planning, development, and the decision-making process. Hauptmann (2005) identified this bottom-to-top approach as the micro level. Hauptmann (2005) reported that the concept of civic engagement developed slowly in the United States and was evident in social contracts such as the Declaration of Independence. With social contracts in place, a new movement of civic inclusion emerged that allowed citizens to become more engaged in community affairs

through elections. Through elections, community members could have an active role and help close the gap between the macro and the micro levels.

The gap between government officials and constituents remains, as voting privileges and practices have not narrowed the civic engagement gap (Hauptmann, 2005). Hauptmann (2005) examined the micro level and found that the adoption and practice of civic education was the new level of civic engagement. The purpose of civic education is to increase civic awareness and civic engagement (Hauptmann, 2005). Civic education has numerous platforms to serve as a means for resources for community members. With platforms in health, environment, and other government entities, community members can engage and communicate their concerns to government entities.

Politics is not the sole entity surrounding civic engagement, and macro-level groups exist within nonprofit organizations (Hauptmann, 2005). In addition, Hauptmann (2005) related that the public administration field and higher education arena are pivotal in expanding the existing body of knowledge in civic engagement education and practices. Public administrators' primary role is to close the gap between the macro and the micro levels and to increase civic engagement in governmental affairs (Hauptmann, 2005). Hauptmann (2005) contended that higher education's role in civic engagement permits members of political and government officials to serve as guest speakers for academic lectures, to assist in campaigns, or participate in internships. Higher education leaders recognized the need to sponsor civic engagement in secondary schools through social science and political science academic program instructors. Therefore, this level of

macro sponsorship led postsecondary institutions to sponsor social and political science workshops centered on U.S. government and politics.

The best avenue to civic engagement is to identify an underlying public affair or civic problem and to find resolution (Hauptmann, 2005). Hauptmann (2005) claimed that it is necessary to set realistic goals to achieve positive results in civic engagement. Therefore, achieving civic engagement is unacceptable without incorporating civic participation. Hauptmann (2005) recommended setting goals to achieve positive outcomes and noted that macro-level managers are better able to close the civic gap between government and constituents with the application of the bottom-to-top approach. In addition, Hauptmann (2005) asserted that activities should not be the only measure of civic engagement, but the results from underlying problems are also important.

The goal of civic engagement is for community members to engage in community affairs (Hauptmann, 2005). Hauptmann (2005) reported that although civic engagement includes establishing and maintaining purposeful partnerships between government and community members, engaging the community has become an issue for the government; thus, it is important to find ways to increase and maintain civic engagement. Communication is the key component to connect community members to community affairs and government products and services (Hauptmann, 2005). Hence, the ultimate goal of increased community involvement can occur after government leaders can identify the most effective way to maintain civic engagement.

Experience and Use of 311

Innovations such as new electronic communications technology have renewed

interests in coproduction, where the government engages individuals as partners in

service delivery (Clark et al., 2013). Clark et al. (2013) related that governments rely on

coproduction to improve public service delivery throughout communities. The

researchers reported that during the mid-20th century, researchers and public

administrators noticed that coproduction in government was dwindling in areas of

scholarly discussion and management efforts, and other marketing efforts were more

popular. After failed attempts to operate organizations without strong consumer

partnerships, coproduction was reborn in the 21st century through technological advances

and citizens' increase use of electronics to remain informed of events occurring in society

and around the world (Clark et al., 2013).

It was important to examine citizen relations management (CRM) data and

population data from the U.S. Census Bureau and explore how public service requests

enter the CRM system and the distribution of public service through the city of Boston

(Clark et al., 2013). Clark et al. (2013) investigated citizens' use of 311 for public service

requests and the distribution of public service requests throughout Boston. Clark et al.

(2013) used data from the CRM system, which is the centralized unit for community

members to call and request public service for nonemergency assistance in Boston.

Citizens used 311 for nonemergency requests such as street repairs and graffiti removal.

Clark et al. (2013) collected data from CRM logs and the U.S. Census Bureau's

American Community CRM log from 2010 to 2011 to generate a mapping system of

citizens' request within geographical areas throughout Boston. From the CRM logs,

Clark et al. (2013) categorized data into census block groups according to the location

from the mapping system. Using inferential statistics allowed an additional breakdown of

the data. After analyzing the data from 2010 to 2011, the researchers found that there

were 537 block groups observed, 101,895 service requests made, and 57,395 initiated by

citizens (Clark et al., 2013, p. 691). Service requests came from the mayor's hotline

(39,092), the Internet (13,523), and the Citizens Connect smartphone application (4,780;

Clark et al., 2013, p. 691).

Coproduction included six models of different dependent variables: total requests,

department requests, citizen requests, mayor's hotline, Internet, and smartphone

application (Clark et al., 2013). Independent demographic variables included race,

income, education, homeownership, and population of block groups (Clark et al., 2013).

Clark et al. (2013) used the American Community Surveys to understand the

demographics of citizens and the geographical span of service requests. Spatial analysis

was suitable for making inferences of ratio distribution work order requests of the six

models.

Demographic variables were suitable for examining the relationship between

coproduction and disadvantaged groups' use of 311 (Clark et al., 2013). Clark et al.

(2013) analyzed citizen requests based on race, specifically between Blacks and Whites,

and the results indicated that no differences existed in service requests. However, Clark et

al. (2013) found a negative and significant relationship between blocks with large Asian

populations that indicated less frequent services and fewer service requests, which was

similar to the results for the Hispanic population. Further analysis showed that income, services administered, and service requests had a positive significance. Income under $25,000 had a negative relationship to citizen service requests compared to income over $25,000 (Clark et al., 2013, p. 694). Education level, such as high school diploma, some college, and bachelor's degree or higher, and citizen requests showed a significant and positive relationship.

An examination of the relationship between coproduction and technological channels used for 311 service requests showed that Blacks were more likely to use the mayor's hotline than the Internet and smartphone application (Clark et al., 2013). Clark et al. (2013) reported that the Hispanic and Asian population data showed a negative relationship between coproduction and technological channels. With regard to coproduction and smartphone use, data indicated a positive significance in all income classifications. Coproduction, education, and smartphone use for service requests showed a negative relationship. Income under $25,000 showed a negative relationship between the mayor's hotline and the Internet for service requests; however, a positive relationship existed between all income levels and smartphone application use for service requests (Clark et al., 2013, p. 696).

In examining the relationship between coproduction and the channels to request service requests, Clark et al. (2013) found that service requests came either internally through the city of Boston's department or directly by citizens. Clark et al. (2013) noted that coproduction was the focus in their examination of the relationship between 311 use and demographic variables. Clark et al. (2013) asserted that technology can increase

coproduction and the ease of information sharing of problematic areas affecting communities in Boston. Thus, it is important for government officials to address citizens' service requests, and this trust factor can serve as a conduit for increased citizen involvement. Open, transparent, and real-time information sharing can occur between government and citizens through advanced information technology, which may help encourage citizens to increase their engagement (Clark et al., 2013).

Experience With Nonemergency Numbers

Municipal leaders in Savannah, Georgia, are forward looking due to their attention to citizen engagement, such as town halls and neighborhood meetings (Fleming & Phelan, 2010). Using interviews, Fleming and Phelan (2010) explored the relationship between 311 use and civic engagement in Savannah. City officials confirmed that products and services were available to community members; however, many times community members were not aware of the products and services available (Fleming & Phelan, 2010). City officials tend to announce the available products and services publicly through the city's website, advertisements, and town hall meetings; however, Savannah city officials determined that products and services were more effective when community members participated in the planning and decision-making process. To encourage more community involvement, community members had various opportunities to engage in public affairs, such as participation in open forums during town halls and neighborhood meetings (Fleming & Phelan, 2010). Citizen participation in town hall meetings could promote government–citizen trust. During the town hall meetings,

Savannah residents met city officials and learned about city services, and they voiced

concerns about issues affecting their neighborhoods.

In 2006, 311 became available to Savannah residents as a convenient and

transparent communication mode for community members to make city officials aware of

problems affecting their community (Fleming & Phelan, 2010). Fleming and Phelan

(2010) reported that, prior to 311, Savannah residents dialed a seven-digit number to

make public service requests from departments such as public works, sanitation, utilities,

and roadway. The researchers noted that 311 began as a cleanup initiative for community

members to report graffiti in their neighborhoods. Community members made more than

500 calls to the 311 call center during the first year. The immediate response to public

service requests led Savannah residents to use 311 for other public service requests

outside of reporting graffiti. Over time, Savannah city managers realized that 311 was not

the first number residents called to make public service requests and residents continued

to contact the public service department directly. Fleming and Phelan (2010) related that

regardless of the convenience of 311 and its publicity, Savannah city managers needed a

new way to increase citizens use of 311 and civic engagement. Subsequently, Savannah

residents participated in citizen focus groups to discuss future programs geared toward

increasing community involvement.

In some urban neighborhoods, police encounters have become the main points of

contact between disadvantaged citizens and their government (Lerman & Weaver, 2014).

Lerman and Weaver (2014) examined police tactics such as stop and frisks (Terry stops)

and problem-oriented policing tactics in disadvantaged neighborhoods to determine what

pattern of civic engagement existed. The researchers collected data from New York

City's 311 nonemergency system to measure civic engagement between police and

community members. Data from New York City's 311 nonemergency number from 2010

to 2011 underwent analysis to generate a dataset from the number of police stops and the

number of calls to the 311 call center. The data indicated that from 2010 to 2011, there

were 1.2 million police stops in New York and 3.1 million calls for service requests to the

311 call center (Lerman & Weaver, 2014, p. 207).

　　　　Civic engagement was measurable using the number of incoming calls to the 311

nonemergency center (Lerman & Weaver, 2014). Lerman and Weaver (2014) explored

the relationship between aggressive policing tactics and civic engagement in communities

where aggressive policing is more prevalent. Findings indicated that community

members are more likely to participate in their communities when government actors,

particularly the police, display and perform trust. When police officers are aggressive,

intimidating, and practice biased targeting methods, community members are less likely

to contact the government for problems affecting their neighborhood. Findings also

indicated that proactive and aggressive policing styles in urban and disadvantaged

neighborhoods did not encourage civic engagement and resulted in community members

feeling less empowered. As a result, Lerman and Weaver (2014) noted that community

members did not contact government officials about problems occurring in their

communities. Lerman and Weaver (2014) recommended that future researchers focus on

community members and government relationships and on how community members

connect to local government to address problems affecting the quality of life in their

communities. The researchers noted that conducting further research is important, as negative citizen–government relationships produce citizen mistrust in government and an unwillingness to engage in community affairs.

911 and Emergencies

The decision of many individuals to call 911 seems straightforward, as people call 911 when faced with perceived emergencies where police, fire, and ambulance may be necessary (Blau et al., 2012). Blau et al. (2012) examined retired and employed individuals to determine if a relationship existed between their professional lifestyle and their decision to call 911. Blau et al. (2012) used a simulation that involved phone surveys, controlled the variables, and conducted regression analyses to determine the relationship between demographic variables such as race, marital status, age, health, and gross income for 2009 and three of five perceptual scales of emergency medical service (EMS) professionals, which include revocation of professional licensure, professional qualifications, and the importance of EMS compared to other emergency public services.

Blau et al. (2012) placed 2,443 phone calls to recruit participants, and 1,051 individuals responded; of the 1,051 respondents, 300 did not continue with the survey (p. 64). Blau et al. noted that 386 retired respondents and 365 employed respondents participated in the phone survey. To determine participants' occupation, participants responded to open-ended questions about their current employment. Participants stated various occupational fields such as transportation, health, administration, education, sales, agriculture, law, manufacturer, and entrepreneurship. Additional variables such as health insurance and highest level of education underwent analysis. Ninety-four percent

of participants had health insurance, 5% had less than 12 years of education, 19% had a

high school diploma or GED, 7% had high school diploma and vocational or technical

training, 29% earned a high school diploma and some postsecondary education, 23% had

a 4-year college degree, and 17% had a postgraduate degree (Blau et al., 2012, pp. 64-

65).

Findings indicated that there was modest support for explaining participants'

decision to call 911 in each sample (Blau et al., 2012, p. 64). Blau et al. (2012) found

only a 10% variance in the decision to call among the retired sample, which decreased to

6% for the employed sample (p. 68). The effect of demographic variables was minimal,

as only total prior year income for employed participants had a significant negative

relationship to the decision to call 911. This finding indicated that decreased income

resulted in a higher decision to call 911. Results also showed that retired participants had

significant differences in the following demographic variables: race, marital status, age,

overall health, and gross income in 2009, as well as differences in the following

perceptual variables: EMS preemployment screening, EMS professional qualifications,

EMS revoked licensure for misconduct, and EMS ranked among other emergency public

services. Furthermore, White participants who were older and married and had lower

health and income were more likely to call 911 based on the EMS standards previously

noted. In addition, the researchers found no significant differences for retired and

employed participants, and EMS ranked among other emergency public services.

Correlation results of the samples showed a positive relationship of two perceptual

variables: (a) EMS professional qualifications and EMS training and (b) decision to call

911. Retired participants were likely to call 911 based on EMS preemployment screening, EMS licensure revocation, and EMS ranked among other emergency public services. No relationship existed between employed participants' gross 2009 income and their decision to call 911. Blau et al. (2012) recommended that researchers conduct further studies on factors that affect community members' decision to call 911.

Motivated Factors to Engage in Civic Affairs

Civic engagement is the ability to identify problems and find resolutions (Phelan, 2010). Thus, civic engagement promotes quality of life when community members are proactive and communicative about problems and concerns that occur within their community (Ohmer, 2010; Phelan, 2010). In addition, digital communication is extremely effective because the majority of community members have Internet access, which allows for easy access to 311, making public service requests, and providing information pertaining to matters affecting the community (Ohmer, 2010; Phelan, 2010). Ohmer (2010) examined the Block Leaders Program and its effectiveness in promoting civic engagement and noted that community members affiliated in block and neighborhood programs increased community spirit and pride. Furthermore, Ohmer (2010) noted that public service administrators often initiate civic engagement through community newsletters, city and county websites, televised radio and television programs, and phone services. Success of community engagement is often due to the level of interaction among community members. Thus, when community members engage within their neighborhood, the engagement often leads to active involvement in public planning and policy (Ohmer, 2010; Phelan, 2010). Continued civic engagement is

the result of continuous involvement in community activities (Ohmer, 2010; Phelan,

2010). Ohmer (2010) related that civic engagement starts with a call to 311. Ohmer

reported that civic participation is a vehicle to improve quality of life and build

meaningful partnerships to influence change with external government stakeholders.

Therefore, the 311 service allows community members to take a stand in improving their

quality of life along and establish trustful collaboration with city officials.

Civic Engagement and Trust

Differences in trust and social attitudes are important areas to explore; however,

research is lacking on how self-reported attitudes relate to individuals' actual behavioral

routines (Hill et al., 2014). As a result, Hill et al. (2014) compared social behaviors of

residents in an urban and nonurban community to understand the relationship between

social capital and social interactions of neighbors. The researchers found that community

members in affluent neighborhoods had greater trust in their neighbors than residents in

urban communities did. Hill et al. noted that social capital dictates the positive gains and

benefits community members receive from goods, products, and services provided within

their communities. Thus, social capital relates to people's socioeconomic status, civic

engagement, and the level of trust community members have for their neighbors and

political officials.

Social behaviors predict the manner in which community members engage in

community affairs (Hill et al., 2014). Hill et al. (2014) related that human inquiry, social

attitudes, and citizen involvement determine community members' trust in decision

makers and reported that this driving factor contributes to individuals' behavior or social

performance in society. Furthermore, Hill et al. (2014) noted that to have a level of engagement or community involvement, individuals need a level of trust in their community, especially of officials at the macro level. A need exists for additional research to explore what motivational factors exist in people with high levels of social trust within their community (Hill et al., 2014).

Trust, Empowerment, and Knowledge and Action in Public Safety Service

How citizens view the police is important, as mistrust of the police can result in limited cooperation and interaction between both groups, which may impede police officers' ability to do their jobs effectively (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011). Wentz and Schlimgen (2011) explored citizens' views of police service and police response to citizen concerns. Specifically, Wentz and Schlimgen (2011) identified whether citizen demographics, actual and perceived contact with the police, and neighborhood context had an effect on citizens' perception of the police. Data came from phone surveys with 426 participants who resided in five neighborhoods in a Midwestern state. Participants had a median age of 47 years. The majority of the participants were Caucasian (83.7%), female (54.1%), and a homeowner (71.1%) with a high school education (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, p. 122).

Findings included a positive correlation existed between citizens' perceptions and police–community relations and safety within the neighborhoods (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011). However, Wentz and Schlimgen (2011) found that race was slightly significant where White participants had more positive perceptions of the police than minority participants did. These finding indicated that how legitimate community members

perceive the police and perceived fairness of police procedures mostly shape community members' perception of the police. Future research is necessary to explore additional areas in social sciences, particularly in police, police services, and police–community relationships (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011). Wentz and Schlimgen (2011) noted that police and community relationships are relevant to identify community-related problems and police operations problems. Efforts to expand citizens' knowledge about what police work entails, including education about standard operating procedures, would serve to increase citizens' judgments of the police as being fair and legitimate (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011). Consequently, empowerment, trust, and knowledge and action are key social constructs to focus on when exploring police–citizen relationships in the social sciences.

Summary and Conclusions

To understand 911 use and misuse, it was important to explore the perceptions of community members. Previous researchers had examined employment status and 911 use (Blau et al., 2012), civic engagement and 311 (Fleming & Phelan, 2010), citizens' perceptions of police services and social disorder (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011), citizens' use of 311 and the distribution of public services in demographically different communities (Clark et al., 2013), and the relationship between civic engagement and aggressive police tactics (Lerman & Weaver, 2014). Thus, a gap in the literature existed on community members' experiences in civic affairs and their knowledge and use of 911; therefore, I addressed that gap. In addition, there was a gap in research on 911 misuse and

civic engagement through the theoretical lens of Gordon et al.'s (2013) civic engagement theory and Bandura's (1986) SCT; I also addressed that gap.

In Chapter 2, I included the introduction, literature search strategy, theoretical foundation, and a discussion on American policing, police agencies as open systems, 911 communications systems, 311 community call centers, 10-digit nonemergency numbers, civic engagement, community members and civic engagement, and a summary and conclusions. In Chapter 3, I include the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, issues of trustworthiness, and a summary. Chapter 4 includes a discussion on the setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results, and summary. Chapter 5 includes the interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusion.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to bridge the gap in knowledge by providing and understanding the lived experiences of community members' civic engagement and their knowledge and use of 911 in a county in the state of Georgia. I explored the perceptions of five community members to gain their insight on civic engagement and 911 use. The study included in-depth semistructured interviews to explore the experiences and perceptions of community members. I used face-to-face conversations and snowball sampling to obtain five community members. Inductive coding was suitable for analyzing the themes. The Walden University IRB approved the application for the study (Approval Number 04-07-16-0364493). Chapter 3 includes the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, issues of trustworthiness, ethical procedures, informed consent, and summary.

Research Design and Rationale

This section includes subsections on research questions and phenomenological research design rationale.

Research Questions

In this qualitative phenomenological research study, I addressed one central research question: What are the experiences of community members who used 911 in relation to their knowledge of 911 and civic engagement?

The six subquestions considered were as follows:

1. What factors motivate community members to use 911?

2. How do community members describe their experience with their use of 911?

3. How do community members describe their experiences with their use of the nonemergency number?

4. How do community members describe emergencies?

5. What factors motivate community members to engage in civic affairs?

6. How do community members who call 911 for nonemergency situations talk about trust, empowerment, and knowledge and action?

Phenomenological Research Design Rationale

The study included a phenomenological research design to conduct in-depth semistructured interviews of community members. Thus, the phenomenological design was suitable for exploring, explaining, and understanding the experiences of community members who used 911 and their knowledge of 911 and civic involvement. I analyzed data qualitatively. I transcribed the interviews, analyzed the transcriptions for themes using inductive coding, and used NVivo to organize and store the data. I followed the parameters established by Walden University's IRB to ensure the ethical protection of research participants.

Researchers use the phenomenological approach to make sense of participants' perceptions as they relate to a social phenomenon (Babbie, 2001; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). Thus, the purpose of a phenomenological study is to understand and explore the lived experiences of individuals as they relate to a social phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Moustakas, 1994). In addition, Leedy and Ormrod recommended that

researchers use small sample sizes, from five to 25 participants, when collecting data from in-depth, unstructured interviews.

Role of Researcher

Neuman and Robson (2009) noted qualitative research practices such as in-depth interviews were less structured and required researchers to be attentive, unbiased, impartial, respectful, and excellent note takers. Researchers who possess the above qualities are effective at conducting qualitative interviews (Neuman & Robson, 2009). Therefore, a qualitative researcher's role is to ensure participants feel comfortable about sharing experiences and providing answers to open-ended questions (Neuman & Robson, 2009). In addition, social science researchers' role is to serve as the data collection instrument and possess the ability to interpret and apply meaning to the social phenomenon. I served as a participant-observer while conducting in-depth interviews for this phenomenological research study. Thereby, I was the key instrument in collecting qualitative data from participants. In addition, I recruited participants by e-mail or in face-to-face conversations. I remained unbiased to all research participants and conducted interviews with high levels of integrity and trust. According to Neuman (2003), a level of power and trust exists between researchers and participants. Researchers who have professional and academic credentials should protect the rights of participants and should not abuse power and trust (Neuman, 2003). Therefore, it is important for researchers to seek ethical guidance and support from institutional review boards, human research rights committees, professional ethics associations, and so forth (Neuman & Robson, 2009). It is important for researchers to remain professional and ethical and not to abuse the power

and trust between researchers and participants. To focus on the safety of participants and to remain within the parameters of ethical protection, I advised participants of the informed consent process. The consent form included background information, procedures, the voluntary nature of study, risks and benefits in the study, information on compensation and confidentiality, Walden University's Ethics and Compliance contact, and a statement of consent. To reinforce the voluntary nature of study, I advised participants that they could refuse to participate in the research or cease their participation at any time without penalty, criticism, or questioning. In addition, I advised participants that their identity would remain confidential throughout the data collection process, including the analysis of transcriptions and the summary. I assigned alphanumeric acronyms such as CM1 for each community member participant (CM) instead of using real names.

I have previous experience as a law enforcement officer in the state of Georgia, and my peace officer certification is presently active and in accordance with the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council. I served 12 years as a law enforcement officer at four different public safety agencies and in the following capacities: police officer (Agency 1); deputy sheriff, road deputy, school resource officer, youth drug prevention instructor, and community outreach coordinator (Agency 2); patrolman II (Agency 3); and police officer and policy analyst and Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council agency administrator (Agency 4). I eliminated potential ethical issues such as not using my former employers (law enforcement agencies) in this study

and not recruiting community members from the four law enforcement jurisdictions I mentioned. The interviews took place in a meeting room at a public library or by phone.

Methodology

This section includes subsections on participant selection, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis.

Participant Selection

The phenomenological research design includes in-depth, unstructured interviews as the primary method to collect data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Researchers commonly conduct phenomenological research to gain an understanding of a social phenomenon from five to 25 participants' perspectives (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Creswell (2013) recommended selecting three to 15 participants to explore a social phenomenon. In contrast, Patton (2002) contended the number of participants for qualitative inquiry depends on the depth of the social phenomenon, and researchers conduct member checks to validate information gained from participants. The general approach for this research project included in-depth semistructured interviews with five community members of a county in the state of Georgia.

The study included face-to-face conversations to recruit community members; as well as snowball sampling. Neuman (2003) recommended snowball sampling as a chain referral connection method used to identify people with direct or indirect connections to a network, organization, or community. Babbie (2001) noted snowball sampling is best for recruiting individuals who are not easily accessible and for locating participants in a community to participate in a research study. Therefore, snowball sampling was suitable

for this research study to collect data from the community. Potential community member participants interested in this research provided their e-mail address, and I e-mailed consent forms to each community member. E-mails served as the primary form of communication between the researcher and participants throughout this research study.

Instrumentation

In social science research, interview questions serve as an effective instrument researchers use to explore a social phenomenon (Macionis, 1997). Thereby, I developed in-depth interview questions to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of five community members to gain insight of their civic engagement and 911 use. Community members described their lived experiences with 911 and the 10-digit nonemergency number and their civic involvement. Semistructured interviews consisted of open-ended questions based on the civic engagement theory constructs of trust, empowerment, and knowledge and action and self-efficacy and lasted approximately 45 minutes. I transcribed interviews accurately and analyzed them for themes and codes using NVivo.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

According to Walden University's research ethics and compliance guidelines, data collection does not receive authorization until the researcher acquires IRB approval. After I received approval to conduct the research study from the IRB, I had face-to-face conversations and used snowball sampling to recruit community members. Community members interested and qualified to participate in this research study provided their e-mail addresses, and I e-mailed consent forms to each potential participant. Community members interested in participating in the research study participated in in-depth

semistructured interviews. I conducted the interviews to explore and understand the experiences of community members about civic engagement and 911 use.

I created consent forms for the community members selected to participate in an interview. Individuals interested in this research study received the consent forms via e-mail. The consent forms included a brief description of the research project and the following topics: background information, procedures (data collection process), voluntary nature of the study, risks and benefits of being in the study, compensation, confidentiality, contacts and questions, statement of consent, and electronic signature disclosure statement (see Appendix A). Participants provided an electronic signature or a written signature. The demographic questionnaire appears in Appendix B of this research study.

At the start of each interview, I followed the procedures listed in my interview guide (see Appendix C). I informed participants that I would tape-record interviews to report the perceptions of participants accurately. To ensure all answers provided were accurate, I conducted transcript reviews by sending the interview transcripts to participants. By following the data collection procedures documented in this section, I was confident the collected data about civic engagement and 911 use was rich enough.

Data Analysis

Patton (2002) asserted researchers analyze qualitative raw data best when they transcribe their own data from an audio recorder to recapture the true essence of interviewees, to ensure transcriptions are verbatim, and to immerse themselves in the data. The next step in qualitative data analysis involves "examining, sorting, categorizing,

evaluating, comparing, synthesizing, and contemplating the coded data as well as reviewing the raw and recorded data" (Neuman, 2003, p. 448). Leedy and Ormrod (2010) recommended using software for qualitative data analysis to organize and store data. Patton (2002) also supported using qualitative software to search and organize words or phrases found in the data and then to store the data accordingly. In this study, I analyzed the data qualitatively, used inductive coding, and subjected the data to a thematic analysis procedure. I identified and extracted common words and phrases from the interviews. NVivo qualitative data analysis was suitable for organizing and storing themes associated to the central research question and the six subquestions.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Threats to Validity

Valid research must include controls that will provide relevant conclusions of the data related to the research study, and researchers must provide generalizations beyond the specified problem (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Threats to validity can exist when researchers fail to address the validity at the beginning of the study, which will cause the results to be irrelevant, not beneficial to the research study, and not suitable to address the research problem (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). To avoid threats of validity, it is important for researchers to employ an appropriate approach and strategy to support research findings.

Credibility

Neuman and Robson (2009) noted internal validity in social science research indicates truthfulness of the data. Qualitative researchers capture the essence of social

science phenomena from the participant's eyes and viewpoints (Neuman & Robson, 2009). Respondent validation research design establishes trustworthiness and to show how congruent the study is to understand ideas, perceptions, experiences, and statements about the social world (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Neuman & Robson, 2009). Participants participated in a validity process called transcription reviews, where I verified the accuracy of their interview transcripts that I e-mailed to them after interviews and transcriptions were complete, and participants provided their feedback by e-mail or phone.

Transferability

Generalization often relates to determining the external validity of a research study. Patton (2002) posited transferability exists when researchers can transfer or fit study results in other situations and frameworks. Similarly, Leedy and Ormrod (2010) described external validity as the ability to use results in a meaningful way to add knowledge on humanity through societal perspectives beyond general meaning. This research study might be fitted to individuals with similar experiences.

Dependability

Babbie (2001) indicated it is common practice for social science researchers to use previous researchers' methods or to replicate previous research. Therefore, it is important for researchers to construct dependable and reliable research methods for continued research in the field (Neuman & Robson, 2009). I used a recording device to record interview sessions, which allowed accurate reporting of participants' responses. I conducted transcript reviews to verify interview transcriptions, which is an appropriate,

valuable, and reliable strategy to establish dependability. As a result, the analyzed data will have an impact for future researchers.

Confirmability

According to Creswell (2013), researchers conduct various validation strategies to show data from multiple sources to confirm the data are valid. All validation strategies are important to qualitative data, particularly when exploring the perceptions of individuals (Holland & Campbell, 2005). Similarly, Creswell (2013) and Neuman (2003) noted reliability, validity, and credibility confirm the trustworthiness of research results.

Ethical Procedures

The National Institutes of Health Office of Extramural Research provides online training courses for researchers on how to protect human research participants. I received a certificate of completion prior to conducting research on human participants (see Appendix D). Ethical procedures in social science research are essential to protect human subjects participating in research (Myers, 2005). Researchers must be open and honest about a research study to human participants (Henslin, 2006). I ensured I was in compliance with all federal and state regulations, which included informing participants on the confidentiality in this research study. This study took place in accordance with the parameters established by Walden University's IRB to ensure the ethical protection of research participants.

Informed Consent

Considering most potential research participants are not knowledgeable about the research process, the researcher must inform all participants about the research study and

their decision to participate in the research study (Sproull, 1995). Informed consent is necessary when researchers recruit participants to participate in a research study. In addition, informed consent provides participants information about the nature of the study, indicates that their choice to participate in the research study is voluntary, and includes their right to withdraw from participating in the study at any time (Macionis, 1997).

Prior to conducting interviews, I provided all research participants consent forms and asked them to provide their consent to participate in the research study. Participants received the consent forms via e-mail and signed them manually or electronically. The consent forms outlined participants' protections and ethical guidelines and indicated that participation was voluntary and that participants could withdraw from the study at any time.

All information obtained from participants will remain confidential. Thereby, I will not use any personal information for any purposes outside of this research project, including their names or anything to reveal their identity and affiliation to other components of this research study (e.g., county of residency). In addition, I informed participants that I would tape-record the interview and analyze the transcription. I also told participants that all data would meet Walden University's data storage requirements. As required by Walden University, all collected data that have identifiable notations such as raw data, tape recordings, interview records, and so forth will remain safe for at least 5 years from completion of a dissertation.

To ensure I was in compliance with Walden University's data storage covenant, I will keep all raw data collected for this research study in a locked file cabinet and all data on my password-protected personal computer. All collected data that fall into the data storage requirements will remain securely stored at my residence for at least 5 years, as required by Walden University. I am the only one with access to the data stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office and to my password-protected personal computer. The data collected from this research study will only be accessible to my dissertation committee chairperson and member.

Social science research can pose physical, psychological, and legal harm to participants, and it is important for researchers to recognize, identify, and assess the level of harm in consent forms (Neuman, 2003). Consequently, it is a best practice for all researchers to address the threat of potential of harm in a research study, regardless of its minimal impact (Macionis, 1997; Myers, 2005). Participants who participate in research studies with a phenomenological design may experience psychological discomfort while answering interview questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Neuman, 2003). For instance, community members may exhibit anxiety when asked about their experience with 911(Neuman & Robson, 2009).

Consent forms outline physical or psychological risks that participants might experience as a result of participating in a research study. Consent forms indicate that participants should not feel obligated to complete any parts of a study for which they may experience discomfort. I did not expect participants to experience severe discomfort while participating. I did not obligate participants to complete any part of the interview in

which levels of discomfort might arise, and participants had the opportunity to terminate the interview session at any time. I informed community member participants about the Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL) in case they experienced any negative effects from participating. The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities has immediate assistance for consumers through the GCAL. The GCAL is a call center operated 24 hours per day and 7days per week. I provided the GCAL statewide toll-free number to community member participants.

In the event that participants had additional questions or concerns about this research study, participants received my contact information and the contact information for the Dissertation Committee Chair. If additional support was necessary, participants received contact details for a Walden University representative equipped to address and handle additional concerns regarding their rights as human research participants.

Summary

This phenomenological study involved exploring the lived experiences of five community members of a county in the state of Georgia. I expected this study to bridge the gap in knowledge by providing an understanding of 911 misuse and abuse for nonemergency problems. I transcribed and analyzed the in-depth semistructured interviews to make inferences of common words or phrases, themes, and codes. NVivo was suitable for organizing and storing the data. This study took place in accordance with the parameters established by Walden University's IRB to ensure the ethical protection of research participants. Community members received the consent forms via e-mail and signed them by hand or electronically. Upon receipt of the signed consent forms, I

contacted the participants by e-mail or telephone to schedule their appointment time for the in-depth semistructured interview at a time that was convenient to them. I tape recorded the interviews, which lasted approximately 45 minutes. Upon closing the interview, participants received my contact information and contact information of my dissertation supervisory committee chairperson, as well as contact information of the Walden University representative equipped to discuss concerns regarding their rights as human research participants. Upon approval of this research study, participants will receive a summary report of the research findings.

Chapter 3 included a discussion of the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, participant selection, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, criteria for participation, ethical procedures, informed consent, and summary. Chapter 4 includes a discussion of the setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, results, evidence of trustworthiness, and summary. Chapter 5 includes the interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusion.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore the

perceptions and experiences of five community members with regard to their use of 911

in relation to their knowledge of 911 and civic engagement in a county in the state of

Georgia. The exploration of perceptions involved gaining insight from five community

members through in-depth semistructured interviews. From the interviews, I explored the

experiences of community members who used 911 in relation to their knowledge of 911

and civic engagement to answer the central research question. I addressed six

subquestions, which included community members' motivational factors to use 911;

community member experiences with 911; community member experiences with the

nonemergency number; how community members describe emergencies; community

members' motivational factors to engage in civic affairs; and how community members

talk about trust, empowerment, and knowledge and action.

In this chapter, I present the findings from the research centered on the central

question and six subquestions. Chapter 4 includes the setting, demographics, data

collection, data analysis, findings, evidence of trustworthiness, and results.

Setting

I used face-to-face conversations and snowball sampling to collect data through

in-depth semistructured interviews with five community members who used 911 for any

reason, in a county in the state of Georgia, between 2012 and 2015. The setting for the

data collection was a meeting space at a public library or by phone. No personal or

organizational conditions influenced participants or their experiences at the time of the study that may have influenced the interpretation of the study results.

Demographics

I collected data through interviews with five community members from the county where the police department and 911 communications center had a headquarters. After engaging in 68 conversations with potential research participants, five agreed to participate in this research study. Selection criteria for five community member participants in the study included (a) status as county residents, (b) age of 18 years or older, and (c) use of 911 between 2012 and 2015. For community member participants to have insight into the interview questions and to optimize the response gained from their lived experiences, the consent form included three sample interview questions. Community members were aware that the interviews would take approximately 45 minutes and that they needed to be willing to participate in the member checking process for approximately 25 minutes, either by e-mail or phone. In addition, I asked community members to recommend participants for this study by providing the names and contact information of potential participants. The five community members agreed to share their perceptions and experience with 911 between 2012 and 2015, knowledge of 911, and civic involvement.

Data Collection

The data collection process consisted of five community members participating in in-depth semistructured interviews. The interviews consisted of participants responding to seven interview questions I created. Interview questions for the five community

members were about (a) their experiences when they used 911 in relation to their

knowledge of 911 and civic engagement; (b) factors that motivated them to use 911; (c)

their experiences using 911; (d) their experience using the nonemergency number; (e)

emergencies; (e) factors that motivated them to engage in civic affairs; and (f) how they

talk about trust, empowerment, and knowledge and action. Each interview lasted about

45 minutes, and I audio recorded them with the permission of the community members. I

transcribed the data after each interview session was complete and e-mailed the

transcripts to participants as a part of the transcription review process.

Data Analysis

In this phenomenological research study, analyzing the data collected was an

important way to identify themes. To explore the social science phenomenon of this

study, I conducted five interviews with participants to employ qualitative data analysis.

Neuman (2003) explained data analysis consists of searching and identifying patterns in

data such as "recurrent behaviors, objects, or a body of knowledge" (p. 447). The next

step for a researcher conducting qualitative analysis is to categorize according to codes,

which refer to words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs associated to the research

question or social theory (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Therefore, to the find the meaning

within this study, I inductively coded participants' responses of their lived experiences

from thick, rich, descriptive data and then thematically analyzed and reported the

findings. NVivo qualitative data analysis was suitable for organizing and storing themes

associated to the central research question and the six subquestions.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

This section includes subsections on credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

I established credibility by remaining on task about the issues presented in this study, and I communicated the interview questions in a clear and thorough manner to prevent miscommunication. Furthermore, during the interview, I did not interrupt participants when they responded to interview questions. I established credibility through a validity process called transcript reviews. This validity process consisted of e-mailing interview transcripts to each participant so the participant could verify the accuracy of the interview transcripts by e-mail or phone. Therefore, I verified the accuracy of each interview.

Transferability

I used the data collected in this study to explore the lived experiences of community members about 911 use and civic engagement. I intend the results to provide public policy administrators and practitioners such as public safety directors, police chiefs, communications directors, county commissioners, and city council members to sufficient information to improve 911 call center efficiency and sustainability and to increase civic engagement through effective policy objectives and practices and public safety civilian education resources. Therefore, the transferability of the results contributes to the existing knowledge on humanity through societal perspectives beyond general

meaning. Moreover, the findings from this study may lead to continued research in the social science field.

Dependability

I established data collection dependability by using an audio-recording device during each interview and efficient note-taking skills. I ensured dependability through consistent data collection, documentation, and thorough transcript reviews. To achieve the data security measures set forth in Walden University's security parameters, all notes and logs will remain secured for at least 5 years.

Confirmability

When exploring the perceptions of individuals, it is valuable to establish a validation technique to ensure the collected data are valid. I employed validation strategies such as data collection and transcript alignment through thorough transcript reviews. The application of thorough note-taking skills helped to ensure the confirmability of the results; therefore, I achieved reliability, validity, creditability, and dependability. Lastly, I used NVivo qualitative data analysis software to organize and store data collected from the interview transcriptions.

<div align="center">

Results

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I used the seven research questions to gain community member participants' perceptions and to identify themes. This section includes subsections on Subquestions 1– 6 and the central research question.

Subquestion 1

Subquestion 1 was as follows: What factors motivate community members to use

911? This subsection includes a major theme and Minor Themes 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Major theme: Vehicular/traffic incidents:

1. Involved in a bad wreck.

2. A car accident with substantial vehicle damage and bodily injury.

3. Disabled car obstructing traffic.

4. Road rage incident.

5. Report a drunk driver.

Minor Theme 1: Workplace safety protocol adherence

1. It's one of our protocols that we have to adhere to.

Minor Theme 2: Welfare/well-being check

1. Neighbor door was left open.

Minor Theme 3: General number for the police

1. I have no idea to call the police department just for information.

Minor Theme 4: Lack of knowledge of when to use 911

1. I don't know at what point you are supposed to dial 911.

According to the community members' interview responses, vehicular incidents

were the main factors that motivated the community members to use 911. Situations

involving the need for immediate help from police were (a) bad wreck, (b) car accident

with substantial vehicle damage and bodily injury, (c) disabled car obstructing traffic, (d)

road rage incident, and (e) report a drunk driver. Community Member 1 (CM1) shared

that he needed police to respond to his accident location because he needed law

enforcement documentation for insurance purposes. CM1 stated,

> But my reason was immediately just trying to get someone [police] onsite. It was
>
> a bad enough wreck. It was not a minor fender where I can just exchange
>
> information, take photos and leave, which I am not sure if you are supposed to do
>
> that.

Community Member 3 (CM3) added that she used 911 to report a multiple-car accident

with bodily injuries and vehicle damage. CM3 shared, "My son was in an accident, car

was damaged. It was an emergency, I felt as though it was an emergency; it wasn't just a

fender bender." Community Member 4 (CM4) advised that she used 911 when she had a

disabled car in the roadway obstructing traffic and she needed help and police assistance

to maintain traffic order. Community Member 5 (CM5) reported that she used 911

because she was in fear of her life due to a road rage incident that resulted in another

driver following her:

> Fear for my life and my integrity. At that moment, I was very fearful. Fearful that
>
> she may follow me and see where I lived and try and vandalize or try to break into
>
> my house or do something and terrorize me in that way. And I live alone with my
>
> kid.

With regard to Minor Theme 1, workplace safety protocol adherence, Community

Member 2 (CM2) reported that he only used 911 while on duty as a security site manager

and that his 911 use strictly related to his profession. CM2 added adherence to workplace

safety protocols was the motivational factor for him to use 911: "There was a female who

had been attacked in their [shopping mall] in their parking lot. She had been hit over the head with a baseball bat and she was bleeding profusely." CM2 further noted that he had not used 911 outside of his profession as a security site manager. For Minor Theme 2, welfare/well-being check, CM4 reported that she used 911 another time for police to investigate an open door at her elderly neighbor's residence and to conduct a welfare check. For Minor Theme 3, general number for the police, CM1 reported that he used 911 for a car wreck but added, "I don't even know if there is a general number for the police versus 911…I have no idea how to call the police department just for information." For Minor Theme 3, lack of knowledge of when to use 911, and contrary to his use of 911, CM1 experienced a moment of hesitancy and uncertainty before he decided to use 911 for a car accident. CM1 stated, "I don't know at what point you are supposed to dial 911."

Subquestion 2

Subquestion 2 was as follows: How do community members describe their experience with their use of 911? This subsection includes Major Themes 1 and 2 and Minor Themes 1 and 2.

Major Theme 1: Very good

1. I've had a very good experience.

2. Very good.

Major Theme 2: Good

1. I think it was a good experience.

2. My experience, it was good.

Minor Theme 1: Okay

1. Okay, so, when I first made the call.

Minor Theme 2: Lag time

1. Placed on hold by the 911 operator.

2. Placed return calls to 911 to report the same incident.

Interview responses for Subquestion 2, for which community member participants described their experience and use of 911, showed that the majority of community member participants' experience was very good or good. CM2 and CM5 reported that their experience with 911 was very good. CM2 stated that his experience was very good and credited his rating to the 911 call takers' level of professionalism. Contrary, to his positive rating, CM2 experienced a few delays (Minor Theme 2) when he used 911 and he added,

I have had some moments that made me a little anxious when I would be placed on hold by the 911 operator. I've been in this job [security] for 10 years. And, over a 10-year period, I would say I haven't been placed on hold no more than four or five times. And it really made me anxious because I was placed on hold and that was a very serious incident. Wait time was less than one minute. I would say about 45 seconds.

Similarly, CM5 shared that her experience with using 911 was very good and that she has a great admiration for 911 communications call center personnel. With regard to Major Theme 2, CM1 and CM4 described their experiences as good. CM1 shared that his experience was good because he was not in shock from the accident and the police officer

response time was good. CM4 stated that her experience was good as the result of the 911

operator's level of concern, helpfulness, and interaction during her call to 911. In

contrast, CM3 noted that her experience was okay (Minor Theme 1 because she had to

place several return calls to 911 (Minor Theme 2) for a police officer to respond to an

accident call:

> Okay, so, when I first made the call, it seemed . . . I thought everything was
>
> understood. I made another 911 call, like after 45 minutes. So, we end up waiting
>
> another 45 minutes. Finally, the officer came and after this was the third time . . .
>
> and then finally he came. And they [911] kept on telling me that he was 15
>
> minutes away, so it was finally 15 minutes.

Subquestion 3

Subquestion 3 was as follows: How do community members describe their

experiences with their use of the nonemergency number? This subsection includes a

major theme and a minor theme.

Major theme: No experience

1. I'm not sure what the nonemergency number is.

2. I did not know that it was a nonemergency number.

3. I did not know there was a nonemergency number.

Minor theme: Experience with the nonemergency number

1. I am aware of the nonemergency number.

2. I've contacted it [nonemergency number] before.

For Subquestion 3, two of the five community member participants were aware of the county's nonemergency number. CM2 and CM3 were aware of the county's nonemergency number, and CM2 reported that he know about the nonemergency number because of his profession as a security site manager and his working relationship with the county's police department. Additionally, CM2 reported that he advised mall patrons to use the nonemergency number for police service information such as case status and to acquire an assigned case number or investigator. CM2 further noted, "So, it's a good system [nonemergency number] for that because those officers have much more complicated issues to deal with than to deal with a hit and run accident that can be handled on a lower level." Similar to CM2, CM3 advised that her profession as a public servant in the political arena led to her knowledge about the nonemergency number and that her experience with the nonemergency number was okay. Furthermore, CM3 noted that she called the nonemergency to report a stolen car in her neighbor's yard; however, she was advised to hang up and to place a return call to 911. CM3 called the nonemergency number because the vehicle was abandoned and there were no signs of injury or traffic impediment: "The only other time that I've used 911 for a nonemergency was for a stolen car that was in my neighbor's yard. I've contacted it [nonemergency number] and been told to dial 911. It [operator] didn't transfer me over."

CM1, CM4, and CM5 were not aware of the county's nonemergency number. CM1 provided a great deal of information relative to his lack of experience with the county's nonemergency number. CM1 stated, "I'm not sure what the nonemergency number is. And it goes back to [the] earlier question, which is I'm sure there's probably

another number for minor accidents or if I lost my cat." CM1 added that information

regarding the nonemergency number is not widely advertised or communicated to the

public, which resulted in his lack of knowledge of the county's nonemergency number.

CM 1 stated,

> I remember on the radio, they were pushing the mantra, "If you can steer it, clear
>
> it," and I haven't heard that. And I haven't heard it that, so I'm wondering if they
>
> have changed that . . . like they change regulations all the time. I think there used
>
> to be a move to have people just to getting the unimportant wrecks out of the way.
>
> I'm sure there is a low priority number but I have no idea what that is. There is a
>
> number: 911 is for emergencies, it's either 411 . . . there's a number for digging
>
> from personal experience. But if there is a number for low priority emergencies, I
>
> actually don't know what it is. . . . I don't know where I would go to look up that
>
> information.

In addition to advertisement deficiencies, CM1 asserted that he was unsure if the county's

website provides information regarding the nonemergency number or a direct number to

police or fire department. CM1 declared,

> I don't think I ever look on there [county's website] specifically for police or fire
>
> information, so I don't know about that [nonemergency number]. I don't recall if
>
> the website has any kind of immediate line to the police page of anything. . . . I
>
> don't know what the number is, but from the question there sounds like there is
>
> one.

CM4 shared, "I did not know that it was a nonemergency number, so, I never used it. I haven't been living here very long, actually. I moved here from Savannah." CM5 related, "I did not know there was a nonemergency number! There's a nonemergency number aside from 911?"

Subquestion 4

Subquestion 4 was as follows: How do community members describe emergencies? This subsection includes one major theme and Minor Themes 1 and 2.

Major theme: Danger to human beings

1.   Immediate threat to life or to limb.

2.   Life-threatening situation.

3.   Not a safe situation for someone.

4.   Devastating in a person.

Minor Theme 1: Corrective action

1.   Monetary fines for misuse of 911 and police services.

Minor Theme 2: Preventive action

1.   Tip lines for reporting nonemergency situations.

2.   Public education and training programs to address proper use of 911.

The results from Subquestion 4 showed that the descriptions of emergencies were similar among all five participants. The participants advised that they were well versed and prepared for the type of questions 911 call takers asked during the callers' initial call to 911. The major theme of dangerous incidents inflicting bodily harm frequented participants' responses. According to CM1, "An emergency would be something where

somebody is in physical harm that's [an] immediate threat to life or limb." CM1 added

that compromised infrastructures such as sinkholes, a collapsed building, or a tree on a

powerline are detrimental to the safety of people. CM1 further noted that people should

not abuse 911 with random matters that are not an emergency, such as a broken leg,

minor damage to a vehicle, or because a person is unable to open a pickle jar. CM2 and

CM5 shared that emergencies are life-threatening situations. Similarly, CM3 declared an

emergency is "not a safe situation for someone," and she further declared "things of life

that you don't feel threatened of your safety or security" are not emergencies. CM4

described an emergency as follows:

> Something devastating in a person or even myself in needing help immediately.
>
> . . . Someone broke into your home, domestic violence, or seeing a suspicious
>
> person break into a car or a shooting happening, a kidnapping, as well as a
>
> suspicious person maybe trying to lure a child away from their mother or a play
>
> area.

Minor Theme 1, corrective action such as monetary fines, emerged as a means to address

misuse and abuse of the 911 number and of police services. CM1 stated, "People call 911

because they can't open a pickle jar. You should have to pay a lot of money for just the

police having to bother with that." Minor Theme 2, preventive action, emerged as an

effort to further address 911 misuse and abuse and to promote public safety awareness

programs and community member training on proper use of 911, emergencies,

encouraging use of the nonemergency number, and implementing a tip line. CM1 shared,

I've heard all kinds of stories of people calling 911 for ridiculous stuff, and

unfortunately I don't know of any amount of training that would solve that

problem. I don't know whether that is media is becoming better at reporting all

these crazy stories or whether humanity is just becoming dumber. I don't know

which it is. I want to be an optimist but it's hard sometimes. Other things,

somebody sees something that is really suspicious in terms [of] whether it's

something terrorism or national threat or things like that, there is so much

information and so many things. People can report such random stuff. I'd be

concerned about constraining those emergencies versus just tip lines or

something. If everyone call 911 because of an abandoned suitcase.

As discussed in Chapter 1, 911 is the national number for help; therefore,

individuals use 911 as a means to receive help for all types of emergency and

nonemergency purposes. CM1 expressed that people do not receive training on how to

use 911, which leads to community members' misuse of 911 and of police services. CM1

further reported that people are motivated to use 911 as a direct correlation to getting a

service, regardless of the severity or nature of the call. CM1 stated, "People call 911

because they can't open a pickle jar. It's like, seriously." Additionally, CM1 connected

the lack of social skills and media as a reason why "humanity is just becoming dumber."

CM1 was a proponent of training youth, especially about public safety. CM1 thought

education about police services should be available in a youth's early years and then as

high school seniors transition to a young adult lifestyle. Similarly, CM5 asserted that

people should not abuse 911 because a community member's food order is late.

CM2 educated mall patrons about the nonemergency number when addressing nonemergency situations. CM2 used every platform to educate mall patrons about the nonemergency number to make certain the 911 number is free to handle emergency calls and to prevent callers from being on hold. Furthermore, CM2 noted the nonemergency call number is a good system only if community members use it, and proper use will free the 911 call takers to handle serious incidents such as a mall patron attacked by a baseball bat and to make police officers available to handle more severe issues.

CM3 used the county's nonemergency number and was advised to disconnect the call and dial 911. These three accounts identified the priority of corrective and preventive actions needed to improve the efficiency of 911 and to promote nonemergency numbers, which led to identifying what corrective and preventive measures are in place to tackle 911 misuse and abuse. CM3 made several return calls to 911, and multiple calls contribute to 911 misuse. To increase effectiveness of the nonemergency number and to improve the efficiency of 911, participants deemed it is necessary to educate and correct misuse and abuse at the 911 intake call level, when possible.

In the aforementioned account of CM3's experience, the 911 call taker employed corrective action when she used the nonemergency number to report an abandoned car. If corrective action is not permissible at the intake level, then customer satisfaction and quality assurance departments may be necessary to monitor customer service satisfaction and organizational performance. Nonetheless, implementation of such programs will require a complete report of all incoming calls to 911, an assessment of all reported and dispatched calls, and an analysis of call types. CM1 asserted government organizations

such as public safety should focus on customer satisfaction and on notifications of changes in services, similar to businesses such as Amazon or Facebook. He noted that communication efforts similar to those used at Amazon and Facebook would keep community members informed of public safety changes of products such as nonemergency numbers and the police department's webpage. This point of learning will improve the awareness and proper use of 911 and increase the knowledge of nonemergency numbers.

Monetary fines were a topic discussed as a corrective action to address 911 abuse for nonemergency problems. CM1 was a strong proponent of community members paying a fine for abusing 911. As CM1, CM3, and CM5 reported, people misuse and abuse 911 because either they are not educated about its proper use or the behavior is allowable without corrective or punitive action. According to CM1, "People [who] call 911 because they can't open a pickle jar should have to pay a lot of money for just the police having to bother with that." CM5 declared public education in public safety programs and events as necessary for community members to engage with, and to have a definitive knowledge of, the 911 call system. CM5 further reported that her understanding and appreciation of the county's emergency communications center stemmed from her visit to the county's 911 emergency center. Therefore, CM5 suggested community members take the initiative to engage more in public safety programs and events to be aware of and understand police operations. CM5 also recommended mandatory visits to the 911 call center to promote awareness of proper 911 use and to serve as a corrective action.

Subquestion 5

Subquestion 5 was as follows: What factors motivate community members to engage in civic affairs? This subsection includes a major theme and two minor themes.

Major theme: Community empowerment

1. To know what is affecting my community.

2. To improve the quality of life.

3. To educate elderly neighbors about criminal and suspicious activity.

Minor Theme 1: Individual empowerment

1. To help represent people that cannot represent themselves.

2. To mentor and serve underserved people.

Minor Theme 2: Organizational empowerment

1. More police–community interaction is needed.

2. Quality assurance program.

3. Public education and training.

Community members' interview responses for Subquestion 5, factors that motivated community members to engage in civic affairs, showed that community empowerment was a major theme. Improving quality of life, safety and awareness, community education, and crime prevention were major themes associated to motivational factors to engage in civic affairs. CM2 reported that he engaged in civic affairs to remain informed of matters affecting his community and to keep politicians accountable for properly serving the community. CM2 added,

I go to city council meetings because I want to know what's happening in my

community, what laws have been passed that affect my community. I pay

attention to politicians and when I see that they're not doing the job that I've hired

them to do. Then I voice my opinion. I call their office. I write letters.

CM2 shared that his children were grown, and he was not as involved the community:

"When my kids were school aged, that was big factor in making sure my community was

safe, they were growing up in a safe community." Similarly, CM3 shared that she

engaged in civic affairs for a "Better quality of life for myself and my family . . . for

things to get better; improving the quality of life." CM5 reported that she was involved in

civic affairs to spread the word to her neighbors about possible criminal activity. CM5

added that the majority of her neighbors were elderly: "So I warn them, I spread the

word, I told them [about the road rage incident]." Additionally, CM5 educated her

neighbors on safety awareness and crime prevention strategies.

For the minor theme, individual empowerment, CM1 expressed that he helped

individuals who did not have the ability to help or represent themselves. CM1 added,

"So, in terms of why I get involved, they [nonelitists] may be second- or third-generation

American because they immigrated and they don't understand how the local governments

make these changes. Other reasons [why I get involved]: community obligation." CM1

felt that his parent's service in the military influenced his civic duty obligation.

Therefore, CM1 felt compelled to serve less fortunate and underserved community

members, especially in secondary education. CM1 explained his reason for volunteering

as a middle school principal:

I am volunteering as principal at a middle school, so I am concerned about

education . . . working in middle school so that we can have more of a balanced

education for kids as an option. I am trying to provide options for kids who are in

lower income neighborhoods, so we give scholarships to younger Hispanic youth.

Their school districts are a nightmare.

CM4 stated, "Honestly, I never really had any engagement as far with that area

[political], but I am very helpful with Church." CM4 shared that she enjoyed serving

meals for the community and providing resources and services to underserved

community members such as housing and employment.

Minor Theme 2, organizational empowerment, is the ability for organizations to

thrive in operations and services with the goal of improving efficiency. CM1 advised that

police departments should revert to officer-friendly days where police were in schools

educating children about police services and safety awareness. CM1 asserted that he

trained his children about the proper use of 911, and police should interact more with kids

in the school system:

I don't know that there's a way outside of maybe how the police interact with

public schools to either train or make them aware of that proper use of [911] . . .

equivalent to 1980s to 1990s the DARE Programs where the police would come

into schools and actually teach kids and kind of be a friendly face. I don't know if

they do that still. . . . I am volunteering as a principal at a middle school, so I am

concerned about education.

Similarly, CM2 noted that police do not want to get involved in small matters that benefit the education and awareness of community members. Additionally, hosting public outreach events in shopping malls serves as an opportunity for police to connect to community members. Therefore, collaborative efforts with mall security, mall operations, mall patrons, and the police will increase awareness of public safety services.

Church was a topic discussed in three interviews as an effective way to help the underserved, the socioeconomically disadvantaged, or nonelitist community members. CM1, CM4, and CM5 expressed the importance of outreach as an effective means to help drive the mission of public service organizations to serve, educate, and provide aid by focusing on external actors.

CM1 considered his civic engagement to be higher than others; however, he was unsure if he should have called 911 when he was involved in a vehicle accident. Therefore, he experienced a moment of hesitancy before dialing 911 because of Georgia's 511 number for traffic reporting (Georgia Department of Transportation). CM1 noted the 511 number is seen on highways, billboards, and government vehicles. Moreover, the 911 number is widely used, other nonemergency numbers such as 811 (Georgia's Call Before You Dig number) are frequently seen in daily travels, compared to the police nonemergency. CM5 was involved in Volunteers in Police, which is a private organization, and visited the county police department's 911 communications center and did not learn about the 10-digit nonemergency number, three-digit nonemergency numbers, or the 911 misuse phenomenon.

Two different backgrounds of civic involvement were evident in CM1 and CM5 that showed the need for improvement in how the county's police department reaches out to all community members about the nonemergency number. CM4 advised that she is a fairly new resident of the county and that she was not aware of the police services and the nonemergency emergency number when she relocated. CM4 used 911 because it was the only number she knew to connect to the county's police department. CM4 added that she relocated to the county from Savannah, Georgia, and that she was not aware of the police department's nonemergency number. Police department leaders can establish outreach programs to educate new community residents about the county's nonemergency number and other public safety services.

With regard to quality assurance, CM1 shared that he is always clear about when to use 911 and assumed that corrective action would have occurred during his initial call to 911. Additionally, CM1 added that it is beneficial for leaders in public safety organizations to apply quality assurance strategies similar to service appointments in such a manner that information is provided, and if too much information is provided at the time of the request, then redirection may help to ascertain pertinent information to make certain the business is effectively communicating about the services provided and about what information is necessary to make certain services will take place. Therefore, a direct correlation and understanding is addressed during the initial appointment request. CM1 noted training is necessary for internal and external actors to know about the proper use of 911 and the nonemergency number. CM1 added that he often heard about bad examples of calls to 911 but had not heard about people being trained on good calls to

911. Public training on 911 is not interactive with public safety professionals, which is a reason people misuse and abuse 911. Therefore, education on 911 should not be limited to the county or police department's website but reinforced through police officer interaction.

Another issue with 911 misuse is cell phone use and the convenience of having a direct connection to police when dialing 911. CM1 stated the increased use of cell phones limits the common sense in people to think rationally during moments of distress. As a result, people contact 911 for nonemergency situations such as opening a pickle jar. CM1, CM3 and CM5 explained that continued misuse of 911 is the result of people using 911 for random and non-life-threatening situations, and CM1 shared that it is important for public safety organizations to establish tip lines to report nonemergency incidents to ensure emergency responders answer and address emergency calls in a timely manner.

CM3 asserted public education on public safety services is effective when policy administrators use plain language to educate underserved community members. Similarly, CM1 recalled that radio had served as a means to educate community members about minor fender bender car accidents on Georgia highways. He remembered the Georgia Department of Transportation advertising, "If you can steer it, clear it." He added that this method of advertisement can be an effective educational tool to community members of the nonemergency number and the proper use of 911. CM1 felt that the layout of the county's website is confusing and the ease of access limits users to find relative information about the county's police department: "I don't think I ever look

on there specifically for police or fire information. . . . I don't recall if the [county] website has any kind of immediate link to the police page."

Subquestion 6

Subquestion 6 was as follows: How do community members who call 911 for nonemergency situations talk about trust, empowerment, and knowledge and action? This subsection includes several themes.

Trust themes: Accountability

1. A history where people do what they say they gonna do.

2. Healthy fear of the police.

3. Somebody acting consistently in both and good and bad circumstances.

4. Someone that we can depend on to give us an intelligent answer.

5. Describing someone's character.

6. Trust basically must come from Him [God].

7. I trust in the police force.

Empowerment themes: Self-efficacy

1. We either have the capabilities to do something or not.

2. Motivational mentor.

3. Giving the people the ability to understand the rules and regulations so that they know what to do when things happen to them.

4. With empowerment is knowledge, praying for knowledge.

5. Every person is a universe every person is a power.

Knowledge and action themes: Acquired and imparted

1. I'm gonna see a sign reminding me.

2. Other knowledge must be acquired or taught.

3. Obtaining knowledge and imparting the same.

4. Requires the work and the fortitude and the perseverance to actually start.

5. Prayer to God for knowledge on anything, decision making, jobs.

Equitable distribution of information themes

1. Empowers people.

2. Written or communicated in an easy way.

Subquestion 6 was as follows: How do you talk about trust, empowerment, and knowledge and action?

Trust themes. The results from Subquestion 6 showed that when community member participants talk about trust, common descriptive terms such as reputation, they used terms such as integrity, character, and trustworthiness to describe personal relationships and organizational commitment to provide quality service and customer satisfaction. CM1 and CM3 spoke of trust to describe the reputation of an organization or the character of an individual. With regard to police services, CM1 acknowledged that he had a "healthy fear of the police" because he trusted that the police would "do the right thing" when they "come out and deal fairly and quickly with it." CM3 used character to determine the amount of trust present in a person. Therefore, a greater amount of trust is indicative of accountability and commitment, and a mutual agreement between government and constituents is necessary for a positive, balanced, and working relationship. CM3 added, "You would talk about trust when you're describing someone's

character." Additionally, CM3 shared that fulfilling duties as a citizen or at the government level requires mutual agreement and understanding. With regard to public safety institutions, resources distribution among all community members should be equal, regardless of their socioeconomic background, and it is paramount for public safety professionals to make certain the 911 system is efficient. CM3 noted,

> So, the trust comes when or distrust comes when an event happens and then the response that was taken. If it is not the correct response, then my trust is broken, and if it is the correct response, then I'm having more faith in that action.

CM2 asserts that everyone should trust in someone to share personal matters and receive intelligent responses. Similar to CM3's response on distrust, CM2 acknowledged that the actions of the government lack trust from its people. CM4 professed that her trust lies solely in her relationship with God and that she considers herself to be spiritual. CM5 related trust to respect and stated that she had a lot of respect for police officers. Therefore, CM5 trusted that the police force would "defend my integrity" in a life-threatening situation.

Empowerment themes. CM4 affirmed that empowerment and knowledge and action are embedded in her trust that God has a plan for everyone. Moreover, she prayed that God would grant her the gift of discernment and the ability to have the knowledge to make sound decisions on anything. CM4 stated, "So, I have to ask the Lord to lead me and guide me in the direction of trying to trust whatever I needing the trust and then also the knowledge came to empowerment." CM1 shared that empowerment is the ability to make decisions and to take charge of their actions: "So, I know in civic terms,

empowerment is typically reminding citizens that they have the ability to make decisions or do something." CM2 associated motivation and engagement as a means to empower his employees for further academic and professional achievements. Similar to CM1, CM3 declared that education empowers people to grow and acquire knowledge and to understand laws, regulations, and policies that can have an effect on their freedom. CM3 responded, "So, empowering people who have no knowledge about what's going on and then educating them about the choices or the opportunity/the possibilities that are there for them. That's what I think is empowerment because now they know." CM5 noted that choices dictate consequences and each person possesses the power to determine his or her destiny: "Each person is a universe and is empowered. Me, the way I empower myself, is just, I respect the law." Therefore, CM5 felt people who are caught and incarcerated tend to have negative views on politics and law and they make negative connotations such as "I hate police officers . . . because I always hear that from people that do things that are not good and if the police catches them." CM5 also noted that her actions empower her son to be a productive community member, and if she fails to be a law-abiding citizen, then she has failed to be a positive role model for her son: "I am my son's example. If I do things wrong, my son is going to have a bad example. If I steal, my son is having a bad example."

Knowledge and action themes. Knowledge and action work together as a means of applying acquired knowledge for the benefit of an action. CM1 believes that the distribution of education and communal resources is not equal to all community members, especially the underserved and legal immigrants. CM1 added a few questions

surrounding distribution of information from government to people: "How would you ever communicate to them [children, teens, young adults], hey that 911 is changing?" He further stated, "So, you can even take that concept of knowledge and say okay well is that fair for everyone within your civic group," which led to his next questions: "How do they [underserved citizens] acquire knowledge and are they disincentivized from learning?" and "Do they have an unfair advantage?" CM2 noted it is important to share knowledge with others and it is pointless to hold onto knowledge because a person is not putting the acquired knowledge into action. CM3 and CM5 noted that knowledge and action play an integral part in obtaining needed resources or services. Therefore, the more people educate themselves about governmental services, laws, policies, and so forth, the more opportunities will occur. CM3 asserted that acquiring knowledge is easy, but the challenge is putting the new knowledge into action. CM5 stated, "Knowledge and action, one is tied with other, and if you know to call 911 for help, then you will receive help from the police."

Equitable distribution of information and services themes. Participants provided their lived experiences of how and of why they felt committed to serving underserved, less fortunate, less informed, and populations of older adults. Similarly, participants hold public service officials and affiliates accountable to make certain the distribution of organizational services to all community members is equal. CM3 asserts it is necessary for leaders of public service organizations to provide resources in plain language for all community members to understand. Therefore, this diverse distribution of communication will be available to all community members regardless of their

socioeconomic background. According to CM3, public safety leaders often revisit

policies and procedures only when matters happen organizationally or individually.

Educating community members about public service operations will increase awareness.

As a result, the impact of 911 misuse and abuse should occur at the organizational level,

and the writing and distribution of policies and procedures should be equal for all

community members. CM1 asserted nonelitist community members are not privy to

resources because elite community leaders distribute information and make policy

changes according their personal agenda or people who share similar socioeconomic

backgrounds. Therefore, CM1 deemed it necessary for leaders of public service

organizations to make certain the distribution of policy changes and services is equal to

all economic backgrounds and not just elitists. This effort in disseminating information

serves as a foundation to educate community members about the proper use of 911 and

nonemergency numbers.

CM2 believed firmly in imparting knowledge and information to all community

members at different backgrounds. CM2 noted that people impart information only

during political seasons and that changes in policies, protocols, and practices should be

visited and fairly distributed according to the occurrence of events. Therefore, CM2

asserted his profession was the only reason he was familiar with the county's

nonemergency number and further noted community members not engaged in community

affairs will not know about police services, especially if the distribution of information

does not occur throughout the community.

CM1, CM2, CM3, and CM5 expressed that relationships with government organizations such as police departments are necessary to achieve individual, community, and organizational empowerment. Therefore, it is important for community members to understand their role and responsibilities to improve their relationship with government organizations. CM1 and CM3 further asserted this sort of government–people agreement can limit confusion about resources such as nonemergency numbers and the correct use of 911. Nonetheless, CM3 shared that the agreement should be written, and the language used to write the policy should be understandable.

Central Research Question

The central question for this study was as follows: What are the experiences of community members who used 911 in relation to their knowledge of 911 and civic engagement? The findings from the six subquestions showed similarities in the experiences of community members who called 911 between 2012 and 2015 in relation to their knowledge of 911 and civic engagement and revealed that they used 911 as a means to receive help during an emergency situation to maintain order and for the safety and security of themselves and within the community. Participants described their experience with 911 as positive and noted that the motivational factors surrounding their use of 911 was to maintain order or for security and safety reasons. With regard to community member participants' description of emergencies, life-threatening and unsafe situations served as common themes. Community member participants engaged in civic affairs focused on either individual or community empowerment. However, participants'

experiences and perceptions with public safety and service organizations ranged from limited to nonexistent.

Participants talked about trust, empowerment, and knowledge and action as positive reflections and connections to serving their community and improving the quality of life. First, participants associated trust to reputation, character, spirituality, and integrity. Therefore, participants relate trust to accountability, associate achievement to empowerment, and use knowledge and action as an input/output process. Participants shared civic engagement experiences mainly focused on outward community service such as mentorship; improving quality of life; and community outreach to underserved, disadvantaged, and populations of older adults. In addition to the central question, five themes emerged from the six subquestions: safety and security, quality of life, community outreach and mentorship, accountability, and self-efficacy. Needing help, feeling safe, and concern for the safety of others appeared to be the motivational factors that warranted a 911 call. Participants' responses about their knowledge of 911 connected to the receipt of police services as opposed to an operational standpoint and procedures. Prior to completion of the interview process, participants did not know of the 911 misuse phenomenon, including knowledge of the 911 call system. Community member participants' experiences with 911 in relation to civic engagement were at individual and community levels and not an organizational level.

The knowledge portion contained in the central research question showed that all participants reportedly used 911 to report emergencies such as car accidents, welfare or well-being check of an elderly neighbor, road rage, and an assault in progress. "Life-

threatening situations," "something that escalates," "911 really is a part of my job," "it is used for emergencies," "to come out and help whatever emergency situation there is," and "to help civilians . . . that are in an emergency situation" were phrases community members used to described their 911 use in relation to their knowledge of 911. Thereby, justification for the 911 calls only affected the well-being and safety of themselves and others and had close ties to the concept of civic engagement.

Discrepant Case Evidence

I observed a few incongruities among the experiences of the five participants, therefore small discrepancies were observed in the participants' accounts of their experiences, which were carefully analyzed for themes. The most noteworthy discrepancies were in the community member participants' accounts of their use of the nonemergency number. Contrary to the positive experiences associated to community member participants' knowledge of 911 and civic engagement, responses from three participants related to using the nonemergency number were nonexistent (CM1, CM4, and CM5); one participant had knowledge of the nonemergency number, which originated from his profession in security (CM2); and one participants was familiar with the nonemergency number because of her profession in the political arena, although she used the nonemergency number but received advice to disconnect the call and dial 911. She shared that she received no explanation about why no one addressed her call to the nonemergency number during the initial call intake (CM3). With regard to the community member participants' involvement in civic affairs, one participant described her past involvement in the citizens academy (CM5); one participant shared that he

attended city council meetings (CM2); and other participants were not involved in

government, political affairs, or public safety programs (CM1, CM3, and CM4). Some

participants were not aware that nonemergency calls are handled at 911 communications

call centers (CM1, CM3, CM4, and CM5), and one participant was aware that

nonemergency number enters the 911 call center (CM2). The lived experiences of the

community member participants' use and experiences with 911, civic engagement, and

description of emergencies, and how they talked about trust, empowerment, and

knowledge and action, were similar and showed little discrepancy.

Summary

The qualitative phenomenological analysis conducted in this study included the

application of in-depth, semistructured interviews to gain the perceptions and the lived

experiences of five community members as they relate to their use of 911 and their civic

engagement. The participants expressed their perceptions, and I explored them, during

the course of their interview sessions, and upon completion of each interview session,

qualitative data analysis took place to identify themes associated to the central research

question and the six subquestions.

From the application of inductive reasoning, I discovered major and minor themes

in each of the community member participants' interviews. The following major themes

emerged from the collected data: (a) safety and security, which provides an explanation

to internal and external reasoning for community members' knowledge of 911 and their

civic engagement; (b) quality of life, which explains the rationale for community

members' expectations of political actors and public safety officials to maintain order and

safety and to provide resources necessary to improve the quality of life within

communities; (c) community outreach and mentorship are strategies community members

employ to improve quality of life and to provide resources to assist in the welfare and

knowledge of others; (d) accountability explained how community members measure

political officials' and public safety actors' levels of trust; (e) self-efficacy was displayed

to use acquired knowledge as an action source to educate and help others to gain an

understanding of public services, laws, and resources and as a personal interactive tool

for guidance and assistance.

All community member participants demonstrated a common knowledge of using

911 in relation to their civic engagement; similar motivational factors that warrant them

to use 911; common knowledge of emergencies; consistencies in their involvement in

civic affairs; and comparable perceptions when asked to talk about trust, empowerment,

and knowledge and action. The only report of differences stemmed from participants

describing their experience using the nonemergency number.

All the participants seemed to share a common interest to improve the quality of

life within their communities, to empower others to be self-sufficient, to educate others

about safety awareness and crime prevention strategies, and to feel safe and secure in

their communities. Furthermore, the minor themes revealed from participants'

experiences and perceptions were (a) organizational empowerment is the ability for an

organization to thrive in operations and services needed to increase efficiency; (b)

preventive and corrective actions are administered proactively or reactively to address,

improve, or eradicate deficiencies; and (c) equitable distribution of information is the equal dissemination of information regardless of socioeconomic background.

Chapter 4 included the setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, findings and results, evidence of trustworthiness, and summary. Chapter 5 includes the interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of five community members with regard to their use of 911 in relation to their knowledge of 911 and civic engagement in a county in the state of Georgia. I used a demographic questionnaire to collect data to select participants for this research study, and I conducted in-depth semistructured interviews with the individuals who met the required criteria to collect data using seven interview questions.

I explored the community members' perceptions to gain insight, to increase understanding, and to bridge the gap in knowledge by exploring and understanding the experiences of five community members' use of 911 in relation to their knowledge of 911 and the civic engagement of five community members who used 911 for any reason between 2012 and 2015 in a county in the state of Georgia. This study was designed to answer one central research question about the experiences of community members in relation to their knowledge of 911 and civic engagement. The study also included six subquestions to explore the motivational factors of community members to use 911 and to engage in civic affairs. I described participants' use of 911 and the nonemergency number; described emergencies; and explained how participants spoke about trust, empowerment, and knowledge and action.

I retrieved rich and descriptive data from the application of open-ended interview questions and from the responses from five community members who used 911 between 2012 and 2015. Qualitative data analysis was suitable for identifying themes associated to

the central research question and the six subquestions. The following themes emerged

from the data analysis: (a) safety and security, (b) quality of life, (c) community outreach

and mentorship, (d) accountability, (e) self-efficacy, (f) organizational empowerment, (g)

corrective and preventive actions, and (h) equitable distribution of information. Chapter 5

includes the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations,

implications, and conclusion to the study.

Interpretation of the Findings

I explored, described, and explained the experiences and perceptions of

community members who used 911 between 2012 and 2015 in a county in the state of

Georgia. This phenomenological research study addressed one central research question

and six subquestions. This section includes subsections on the central research question,

Subquestion 1, Subquestion 2, Subquestion 3, Subquestion 4, Subquestion 5, and

Subquestion 6.

Central Research Question

The central research question was as follows: What are the experiences of

community members who used 911 in relation to their knowledge of 911 and civic

engagement? The findings from the six subquestions based on the experiences of

community members who used 911 between 2012 and 2015 in relation to their

knowledge of 911 and civic engagement showed that community members had an

understanding that 911 is for emergencies and they are actively involved in their

community. However, community members were not aware of the problems associated

with 911 misuse. Participants had limited knowledge of the 911 call system practices and

procedures from an operational standpoint and of the 911 misuse phenomenon associated

with the implementation of the nonemergency number. Participants believed that more

awareness and education is necessary at the organizational level to educate and make

community members aware of problems associated to 911 misuse and to inform

community members of the nonemergency number.

The findings from the central research question supported the propositions of

Gordon et al.'s (2013) civic engagement theory and Bandura's (1986) SCT. With regard

to Gordon's civic engagement theory, empowerment is a central component; therefore, to

capture the true essence of civic engagement, it is necessary to make certain the

fulfillment of all three areas of empowerment occurs: individual empowerment,

community level empowerment, and organizational empowerment. The findings revealed

that organizational empowerment was a missing component of community members'

civic engagement experiences. Furthermore, participants expressed that more outreach

needs to occur from public safety organizations to increase the focus outward to educate,

train, engage, and inform community members on actions affecting public safety

services, such as the improper use of 911.

As public safety organizations are open systems, Kucukuysal and Beyhan (2011)

noted that it is imperative that leaders of public service organizations focus on remedying

problems internally and externally. To remedy problems affecting organizations, input is

necessary from internal actors and external actors. Gordon et al. (2013) asserted

individual empowerment is evident in individuals with high self-efficacy, and such

individuals possess certain behaviors motivated by civic engagement. In terms of helping

others to be self-sufficient, individual empowerment coupled with community level

empowerment, is achievable through a determination to improve personal and

community quality of living. Thus, civic engagement is a conduit to empower individuals

to achieve personal and civic goals and to understand behavioral and learning capabilities

as supported in the SCT.

Considering participants were not misusing and abusing the 911 system, it is

imperative that leaders of public safety organizations engage all types of external actors

necessary to curtail 911 misuse and to educate and engage community members about

911. Similarly, Wentz and Schlimgen (2011) found that community members'

perceptions of police services affected community members' involvement in the

community and with public safety organizations; therefore, it is paramount to identify

effective equitable ways to reach out and distribute information to all types of community

members to improve police–community relationships and police operations problems.

Ohmer (2010) noted that civic engagement is attached to community members' sense of

responsibility and commitment to address issues affecting quality of life and to make

necessary strides to make the community a better and safer place to live. Similarly,

Hauptmann (2005) asserted civic engagement is a conduit to increase awareness in

community affairs that negatively affects quality of life.

All participants in the study shared their accounts of empowerment through their

participatory behaviors and learning capabilities, as found in Bandura's (1986) SCT.

Participants' experiences coincided with Bandura's (1986) SCT and revealed that

community members actively engaged in their communities are likely to understand that

the 911 number is for emergencies. Additionally, these community members have a greater respect and trust in public safety services and hold public officials accountable to maintain order, provide needed services to ensure safety and security, and provide resources to improve quality of life. Therefore, actively involved community members are empowered individuals who possess the knowledge and who seek opportunities to educate, mentor, or help less fortunate and underserved community members to be self-sufficient. The findings indicated that self-sufficient individuals have connections to their community and that participants do not have connections to public safety organizations and safety and awareness programs associated to public education and training. Therefore, it is imperative for leaders of public safety organizations to engage both actively and nonactively involved community members at the community level to achieve organizational empowerment.

Subquestion 1

Subquestion 1 was as follows: What factors motivate community members to use 911? The results from Subquestion 1 showed that community member participants used 911 to report severe vehicular and traffic incidents, to follow workplace safety protocols, and for police to conduct welfare checks. Safety and security was a common theme used to describe motivational factors for participants to use 911. Situations involving the need for immediate help from police such as traffic incidents, car accidents with substantial damage, a disabled car, or road rage served as factors that warrant a call to 911. In terms of the well-being of an individual and to the quality of life, participants used 911 to report suspicious activity, to have police conduct a welfare check, to report an aggravated

assault in progress, and to investigate an open door. Community member participants deemed all these factors an emergency and they felt the need to call 911 because the incidents were detrimental to their safety and to the safety and security of others. Three participants felt that non-life-threatening situations should not flood the 911 system; another participant was uncertain if an accident warranted a 911 call and was unsure if a general direct number for the police existed.

The major and minor themes from Subquestion 1 indicated that community members used 911 for safety and security. The 911 number is the universal number for help and is easily remembered when individuals need immediate public safety response (NENA, 2014). Blau et al. (2012) showed that professional lifestyles and perceptions of emergency services personnel influenced medical calls to 911. Thus, individuals faced with life-threatening situations or perceived emergencies will call 911 for police, fire, or ambulance (Blau et al., 2012).

Subquestion 2

Subquestion 2 was as follows: How do community members describe their experience with using 911? The results from Subquestion 2 showed that the majority of the community member participants described their experience as good, very good, and okay. Participants advised that 911 operators were patient, comforting, concerned, and calm, despite the turmoil experienced by each participant. Moreover, the pleasant and calm demeanor of the 911 operators resulted in the participants feeling satisfied. One participant advised that his experience with 911 was very good, although he experienced multiple incidents of being on hold, particularly when he called 911 to report an

aggravated insult in progress. Another participant reported that her experience with 911 was okay, considering that she placed three separate calls to 911 to report a major accident that resulted in the police officer responding in 1 hour and 30 minutes.

The major and minor themes from Subquestion 2 revealed that community members felt satisfied with their initial call to 911. Satisfaction in public safety organizations is paramount to identify organizational deficiencies and to improve operations and services provided to internal actors and specifically external actors (Gordon et al., 2013). Social attitudes and behaviors dictate the perceptions of individuals regarding their understanding of public safety services (Hill et al., 2014; Sampson, 2004). With regard to 911 misuse, leaders of public safety organizations will need to help with changing the behaviors of community members who do not trust in public safety, are not actively involved at the community, or lack the knowledge of 911 and its purpose.

Subquestion 3

Subquestion 3 was as follows: How do community members describe their experience with their use of the nonemergency number? The results from Subquestion 3 showed three of the five community member participants were not aware of the county police department's nonemergency number. Once participant advised that he was aware of the nonemergency number, and another participant used the nonemergency number and received advice to disconnect and call 911. Two participants were aware of the nonemergency number because of their profession. Participants faulted public safety organizations for not educating community members adequately.

The minor and major themes in this study were similar regarding the effectiveness of how organizations inform consumers about products and services. Clark et al. (2013) had similar findings and reported that it is government officials' responsibility to address communication deficiencies of products and services offered to the public. Thus, it is necessary to revisit the effectiveness of products and services from an external standpoint, first starting with external actors while concentrating on demographics and technology. Similarly, Fleming and Phelan (2010) found that citizen participation in government planning process will positively impact and improve the quality of life. Therefore, citizen participation in decision-making matters will improve and increase the effectiveness of public services and operations.

Subquestion 4

Subquestion 4 was as follows: How do community members describe emergencies? The results from Subquestion 4 showed that the descriptions of emergencies were similar among all five participants. Dangerous situations, incidents inflicting bodily harm, compromised infrastructures, suspicious activity, or welfare checks were incidents participants described as emergencies. All community member participants reported incidents in the community that compromise the safety and security of others and affect quality of life.

Cognitive abilities, social skills, lifestyle, and demographics play a vital role in understanding how people regulate their behavior (Pajares, 2002). Participants engaged in community affairs described emergencies as life-threatening situations; however, community members not actively involved in their community acquire different social

skills, and their perceptions are different compared to highly engaged community

members (Blau et al., 2012). The perceptions about emergencies will be different among

engaged and nonengaged community members; therefore, social skills affect their

requests for public safety services (iCERT, 2011; Sampson, 2004).

Subquestion 5

Subquestion 5 was as follows: What factors motivate community members to

engage in civic affairs? The results from Subquestion 5 showed that participants engaged

in civic affairs to improve the quality of life within their community. Community

member participants engaged in civic affairs to remain informed of matters affecting their

community, to increase knowledge on crime prevention strategies, and to mentor and aid

underserved populations.

The major and minor themes from Subquestion 5 indicated that community

member participants' experiences and motivational factors directly connected to their

community. Gordon et al.'s (2013) civic engagement theory explained that civic

engagement is most effective when individual empowerment, community-level

empowerment, and organizational empowerment exist. Likewise, Phelan (2010) and

Ohmer (2010) asserted that being proactive is the key to effective civic involvement.

Thus, civic engagement promotes citizens' ability to identify and resolve problems that

affect the quality of life within their community and to have a voice in decision making,

planning, and processes on matters affecting their community. This level of

empowerment also promotes community spirit and pride. Svara and Denhardt (2010)

noted people do not civically engage until they experience a negative event; however, this

research showed this was not the case with the participants, as they were involved in their community. Civic engagement serves as an opportunity for public service organizations to keep community members engaged in affairs affecting their community and public services (McCampbell, 2011).

Subquestion 6

Subquestion 6 was as follows: How do community members who call 911 for nonemergency situations talk about trust, empowerment, and knowledge and action? The results from Subquestion 6 revealed that community member participants used common descriptive terms such as reputation, character, integrity, and respect when they talked about trust. These terms are associated to accountability and were used to describe the required actions of political officials and public service actors as they relate to trust within governmental organizations, politics, and the public safety arena. One participant shared that her trust is spiritually based and that she makes certain that God is in control. Another participant expressed that he has a healthy fear of the police, and another participant felt that people who are caught and incarcerated tend to have negative views on politics and law, and they make negative connotations such as "I hate police officers." Therefore, a greater amount of trust is indicative of accountability and commitment.

Participants felt that empowerment and knowledge and action work together as a means of applying acquired knowledge for the benefit of an action. With regard to empowerment, participants expressed commonality to improve quality of life. One participant shared that she felt empowered through prayer and her relationship with God. One participant felt that repetition served as a memorization tool and was the key to

learning new information; another participant shared that action drives knowledge; another participant expressed that she prays to God for knowledge on anything such as decision making; and another participant declared that education empowers the power to grow, to acquire knowledge, and to understand laws, regulations, and policies that can have an effect on their freedom. With regard to empowerment, participants believed the distribution of educational and communal resources to all community members is not equal, especially to the underserved and legal immigrants. Thus, government and public service institutions have a responsibility to make certain the dissemination of information to all community members is equal, regardless of their socioeconomic background. With regard to knowledge and action, one participant advised that people know 911 equates to public safety response; therefore, if a person knows to dial 911, then that person will receive help from the police regardless of the circumstance.

The themes from Subquestion 6 revealed that community member participants are self-sufficient individuals who possess the desire to empower others. Findings from participants' experiences and perceptions showed community members' actions aligned to Bandura's (1986) six constructs of SCT: reciprocal determinism, behavioral capability, observational learning, reinforcements, expectations, and self-efficacy. In sum, participants' actions were indicative of self-efficacy, as community members had high expectations, personal goals, and cognitive skills that exhibited confidence and trust in public safety.

Participants were engaged, motivated, and empowered within their community, but were not engaged at the public safety organizational level. As community member

participants trusted their public safety organizations and were not contributing to 911

misuse, it is important for leaders of public safety organizations to establish trust in

nonengaged community members. Wentz and Schlimgen (2011) found that demographics

showed a positive correlation between citizens' perceptions and community-related and

police operations problems. Thus, citizens' perceptions and interactions with police

determined whether community members would trust or distrust public safety services

(Hill et al., 2014).

Limitations of the Study

As discussed in Chapter 1, limitations existed in the areas of generalizability and

trustworthiness. As noted in the limitations section of Chapter 1, the limitations

surrounded the inability to generalize this study's results. Because the sample size was

small, the findings may be generalizable to similar populations of county residents;

however, the results may not be indicative of all community members within the county

used in this research study. Moreover, the results may not be generalizable to county

affiliates such as business owners and residents of other counties. Therefore, to increase

the generalizability of future research, the sample could be larger and could be an

accumulation of participants from multiple cities, counties, and states to gain further

insight into, and understanding of, community members' 911 use in relation to their

knowledge of 911 and civic engagement. Future studies involving the civic engagement

phenomenon might include a different sampling strategy, such as convenience sampling,

and a different data collection method, such as narrative.

With respect to the scope of conducting a phenomenological research study, social desirability bias was another possible limitation. However, I assumed that all participants were truthful in their responses when they answered the interview questions.

Recommendations

As noted in the literature on civic engagement and self-efficacy, individuals highly involved in their communities have a sense of individual and community-level empowerment. These individuals are self-motivated to remain informed of issues that negatively affect their communities, and they are quick to take a stand to improve the quality of life within their neighborhoods. As identified in the findings, participants in this study were well-versed about using 911 and describing emergencies. Participants also provided motivational factors that warranted the use of 911 and described the reason for their involvement in civic affairs. Organizational empowerment was a missing component from participants' experiences. To achieve sustainability, it is important for organizational leaders to rely on input from internal and external actors. Therefore, I addressed the theme of organizational empowerment and broke it down into the following categories: public outreach (training, education, and awareness programs and events), quality assurance, and advertising.

Public Outreach

Community outreach was a common theme for all participants, and the leaders of public organizations can benefit from adopting or strengthening public outreach strategies. Leaders of public safety organizations can improve efficiency and operations by focusing on public outreach strategies. To educate community members on the proper

use of 911 and to engage community members' involvement in public safety

organizations, leaders of public safety organizations should conduct outreach to diverse

communities, such as schools, faith-based organizations, and shopping malls. Leaders

should deliver education about police services in the early years of youths and then as

high school seniors transition to a young adult lifestyle; faith-based organizations can

serve as a conduit to educate a variety of community members; and shopping malls serve

as an opportunity to host educational and awareness events to connect police to

community members. These collaborative efforts will serve as means to improve police–

community relations, establish trust, and increase awareness of public safety services.

Quality Assurance

All participants appeared to be comfortable when they talked about trust,

empowerment, and knowledge and action. Participants talked about trust, empowerment,

and knowledge and action, and their accounts appeared to be positive; however, future

researchers could explore the perceptions of underserved and nonelitist community

members. With regard to 911 misuse, researchers could find the number of

nonemergency calls entering 911 and identify possible trends from geographical areas.

Customer satisfaction surveys or follow-up calls (noninvestigative) are additional options

to gain insight into community members' use of 911, knowledge of 911 and the

nonemergency number, and civic involvement in public safety awareness programs. It is

possible to implement a public service customer quality assurance division within police

departments.

Advertising

A noteworthy finding from this research study was that three of the five participants did not know about the county's nonemergency number. Therefore, it is possible for public safety officials to help educate community members about the county's nonemergency number. Advertisement strategies could help to increase awareness of the nonemergency number. Most police vehicles advertise "Emergency Dial 911" or "Dial 911," so it may be possible to add "Nonemergency Dial XXX-XXX-XXXX" or the police department's website address. A second noteworthy finding was that community members engage in their communities; however, community member participants did not discuss motivational factors relating to their involvement in programs and resources at the civic organizational level. Therefore, it is imperative for the leaders of public safety organizations to maximize learning capabilities through advertisement. For example, when police officers respond to a call, they often provide the complainant with a business card of the complainant's case number. Thus, it is important to maximize the information provided on business cards, including the police department's website address and nonemergency numbers. Advertisement strategies can include billboards, social media, and televised programs.

It is possible to conduct a study with high school seniors to gain insight into their use of 911 in relation to their knowledge of 911 and civic engagement. It is also possible to implement education and awareness programs in school systems to bridge the gap about this civic engagement phenomenon.

Implications

This study has several implications for positive social change at the individual, organizational, and societal levels. This study involved exploring the perceptions and lived experiences of community members' knowledge and use of 911 in relation to civic engagement. As found in this study, individuals involved in their communities have a positive working knowledge of 911 and its intended purpose. Therefore, implications for positive social change can exist at all levels when researchers incorporate collaborative efforts. From the individual standpoint, it is important for public safety actors to ensure they are trustworthy. Therefore, when trust exists within government organizations, community members are more likely to feel engaged in their communities (Lerman & Weaver, 2014). As indicated in this research study, individuals consider political officials and public safety actors to be honest in their daily actions, especially when providing services to consumers. It is paramount that leaders of public safety organizations, which are open systems, gain input from internal and external actors to ensure the services rendered fit the intended purpose of protecting and serving (Kucukuysal & Beyhan, 2011). Gordon et al. (2013) asserted that individual, community level, and organizational empowerment serves as an effective way to increase and improve engagement from internal and external actors. Thus, it is important that leaders of public safety organizations focus on outreach strategies to improve community awareness on public safety operations and services. Customer satisfaction is a contributing factor for an organization to thrive, and the output is just as important as the input of the open systems theory. Public safety policies may need revisiting as an effort to affect positive social

change. Public safety policies tend to have a societal impact on the organization and on

the community it serves. Nonetheless, as discussed in the literature, the inclusion of

community members is an effective measure to educate and inform consumers of changes

affecting their communities and quality of life. It is important for public safety actors to

ensure the communication and distribution of services is equal to all community

members, and this sometimes requires revisiting the distribution of information through

communities.

Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore the

perceptions and experiences of five community members with regard to their use of 911

in relation to their knowledge of 911 and civic engagement in a county in the state of

Georgia. With the ongoing issue of 911 abuse and misuse for nonemergency problems, it

was necessary to explore the perceptions and experiences of community members who

had used 911 in relation to their knowledge of 911 and civic engagement. The results

showed that community members with a clear, definitive working knowledge of 911 are

not misusing and abusing 911. Along with knowledge, community member participants

engaged in their communities to make certain the quality of life is substantial and issues

affecting the quality of life are addressed. These community members held political

officials and public safety actors accountable to improving the quality of life and to

ensuring needed resources are available where safety deficiencies exist in their

communities.

Self-sufficient community members possessed the knowledge and participatory behaviors to succeed and to be productive community members in society. These individuals often feel driven to help underserved community members to gain access to community resources. Consequently, high self-efficacy is a motivational conduit to empower others to achieve individual goals. The theme of community outreach and mentorship was an effective measure to engage individuals, particularly when focusing on the underserved, the nonelitists, and the population of older adults. Community member participants felt empowered to serve underserved individuals; therefore, leaders of public safety organizations should encourage and promote organizational empowerment in the public safety arena. This level of empowerment among public safety personnel might lead to increased levels of community members' trust, civic engagement, empowerment, and knowledge and action, which will benefit individuals, communities, organizations, and society as a whole and promote positive social change.

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Appendix A: Consent Form for Community Members

You are invited to take part in a research study titled: *Institutionalizing Civic Engagement to Reduce the Misuse and Abuse of 911 Calls.* This research study will allow community members to give their views about their involvement in the community and their use of the 911 emergency call system. You were chosen for this study because you are a community member in the county that this research study is being conducted. This form is a part of a process called "informed consent". The informed consent allow you to understand this research study before you decide to participate in this study.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Jacquetta E. McCoy, who is doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to explore your thoughts about your participation in the community and your understanding and use of the 911 emergency number. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer seven interview questions. Here are some sample questions:

- How would you describe your experience with your use of 911?
- How do you describe your experience with your use of the nonemergency number?
- How do you describe emergencies?

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
- Complete a demographic questionnaire, which will take approximately 5 minutes.
- Participate in an in-depth, open-ended interview which will be conducted by one of the following: face-to-face, Skype, FaceTime, or phone and the interview will be recorded by the research using a voice recorder.
- Participate in one interview session lasting for approximately 45 minutes.
- If you voluntarily agree to be a participant in this study, a written signed consent form will need to be completed.
- If you select the face-to-face interview option, the interview will take place in a meeting space at the [   ] Public Library located at [   ], [   ], Georgia [   ].
- Participate in verifying the accuracy of your interview transcript that will be emailed to you at a later date after the interview has been completed and the interview has been transcribed. This will take approximately 25 minutes by e-mail or phone.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at Walden University or will I, the researcher, Jacquetta E. McCoy, treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later or during the study. If you feel stressed during the study, you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
Being in this type of study may involves some risk of the minor discomforts that that can come upon in daily life such as stress or emotional distress encountered in daily life, such as tiredness, stress or becoming upset. It is unlikely that participation will cause any serious discomfort; however, participants will be referred to contact Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) offer immediate assistance for consumers through the Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL). The Georgia Crisis and Access Line is a call center that is operated 24 hours/7days a week. The GCAL statewide toll free number 1-800-715-4225 will be provided to community member participants.

The benefits to participation are to provide you with a voice in literature and for you to share your thoughts to public policy administrators about community members' participation in the community and the use of the 911 emergency number.

Compensation:
There will be no compensation for your participation in this study.

Confidentiality:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. As required by Walden University, all collected data that has identifiable notation such as raw data, tape recordings, interview records, and so forth will be secured for safekeeping for at least 5 years from completion of the research study dissertation. So, to be in total compliance of Walden University's data storage agreement, I will keep all raw data collected for this research study in a locked file cabinet, and data processed on my personal computer will be password protected. All collected data that falls into the data storage requirements, will be securely stored at my residence for at least 5 years, as required by Walden University. In addition, I am the only one with access to the data stored in my home office locked file cabinet and password protected personal computer.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher, Jacquetta E. McCoy at (470) 338-0774 or via email at Jacquetta.McCoy@Waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a

participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. Dr. Endicott is Walden University's Director of Research Ethics and Compliance at 1-800-925-3368, extension 3121210. Dr. Leilani Endicott can be emailed irb@waldenu.edu. All participants will be emailed a summary report of the study's findings after the study is complete. Walden University's approval number for this study is 04-07-16-0364493 and it expires on April 6, 2017.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

If you feel you understand the study well enough to make a decision about your participation, and that you have read the above information. By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant_____

Date of consent_____

Participant's Written or Electronic* Signature_____

Researcher's Written or Electronic* Signature_____

*Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire

Directions: Please answer the following demographic questions below.

1. What is your name?

2. Are you 18 or older?

3. Are you a resident of _____ County?

4. Have you used 911 for any reason between 2012 – 2015?

5. What is your contact information?

6. Are there other community members that you would like to recommend to be

    participants in this study? If so, what are their names and contact information?

Appendix C: Interview Guide for Community Members

Introduction

- Welcome participant and introduce myself.

- Explain the general purpose of the interview and the participant selection

  criterion.

- Discuss the purpose and process of interview.

- Explain the presence and purpose of the recording equipment.

- Outline general ground rules and interview guidelines such as being prepared for

  the interviewer to interrupt to assure that all the topics can be covered.

- Review break schedule and where the restrooms are located, if face-to-face

  interview.

- Address the assurance of confidentiality.

- Inform the participant that information discussed is going to be analyzed as a

  whole and participant's name will not be used in any analysis of the interview

  instead an acronym with a number will be used.

Discussion Purpose

The purpose of this study is bridge the gap in knowledge by exploring, the

perceptions of community members, in a county in the state of Georgia, about civic

engagement and the use of 911.

Discussion Guidelines

Interviewer will explain:

You will be asked a series of interview questions and I request that you respond directly to the questions asked. In the event that you do not understand the question, please stop me for clarification. Please understand that, I am here to ask questions, listen to your responses, and answer any questions that you might have pertaining to this research study. If for some reason, the interview is sidetracked or distracted, I will politely interrupt you and redirect you to research matter. I request that you answer the interview questions openly and honestly and your identity and participation in this research study will be kept confidential. To make certain that your responses are documented accurately, this session will be tape-recorded.

General Instructions

To protect your identity and the identity of others, I request that you refrain from using the names individuals when you respond to questions asked during the interview. Your identity will be kept confidential. Note: any information that identifies other parties will be removed from the analysis.

Definitions

Civic affairs. Programs and resources implemented to increase community members' involvement in political and civic matters which promote civic involvement to improve the quality of life (Hauptmann, 2005).

Civic engagement. Active involvement in the planning and process of activities affecting the quality of life in community affairs (Babbie, 2001; Hauptmann, 2005).

Interview Questions

1. What are your experiences when you use 911 in relation to your knowledge of 911 and civic engagement?

2. What factors motivated you to use 911?

3. How would you describe your experience with your use of 911?

4. How do you describe your experience with your use of the nonemergency number?

5. How do you describe emergencies?

6. What factors motivated you to engage in civic affairs?

7. How do you talk about trust, empowerment, and knowledge and action?

Conclusion

Upon completion of the interview, I will discuss the member checking process with participant, ask the participant if they have any question pertaining to their participation in the research study, provide my dissertation committee email address and Walden University's Ethical and Compliance contact, and thank the participant for volunteering their time to participate in this research study.

Appendix D: National Institutes of Health Certificate of Completion

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Jacquetta White-McCoy** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 06/22/2013

Certification Number: 1200091