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The Role of Organizational Justice in Police Interaction Decisions With Citizens Post-Ferguson

Joshua Lee Adams
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Walden University

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Joshua Adams

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

The Role of Organizational Justice in Police Interaction Decisions With Citizens Post-
Ferguson

by

Joshua L. Adams

MA, American Public University System, 2014

BS, Columbia Southern University, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

February 2018

Abstract

Recent negatively publicized police-citizen interactions in the media, followed by a subsequent rise in crime rates in the United States, has been named the Ferguson Effect. The Ferguson Effect has been explored by prominent scholars in the criminal justice community; however, little is known about how police officers in small police agencies perceive the Ferguson Effect. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of police officers regarding the Ferguson Effect in small police agencies, as well as police officers' perceptions of their own organizational justice. The theoretical framework for this study was Greenberg's theory of organizational justice. Research questions focused on exploring police officers' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of the Ferguson Effect phenomenon and willingness to partner with the community. A qualitative phenomenological study design was employed, using purposeful random sampling and semistructured interviews of 9 active sworn law enforcement personnel in southcentral Virginia. Data were analyzed through In Vivo coding, pattern coding, and structural analysis utilizing NVivo 11 Pro. Themes included: (a) racial division, (b) rush to judgment, and (c) steadfast leadership. Findings indicated participants demanded clear and fair policies and procedures from leadership, increased effort of transparency in policing, feelings of racial tension, and the need to regain community trust post-Ferguson. Implications for social change include refinement and development of leadership training for police leadership and refinement in organizational policies that support fairness, community engagement, and community interaction.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my wonderful wife Michelle and sons Jaden and Jathan. Michelle, you have stood by my side for the past 16 years through late night duty calls, two deployments in Iraq, and a tour in South Korea. You have definitely been my rock since I started this doctoral journey, and I could not have done this without you. My sons Jaden and Jathan, I hope that you read this work one day, and will be inspired to do better and be men of greatness.

“I prayed for twenty-years but received no answer until I prayed with my legs”

-Frederick Douglass

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I wholeheartedly would like to thank the two police executives who graciously authorized me to speak with their law enforcement officers, and for those nine brave participants who shared their personal lived experiences and perceptions with me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Since the beginning of the practice of policing in the United States, history has shown that when citizens feel oppressed, there is an increased dialogue on accountability of law enforcement officers and perceptions of police legitimacy are oftentimes decreased (Walker, 2016). The early 1990s were an important era in policing as there was a demand by citizens for increased police professionalism and fairness to all citizens regardless of race, religion, or gender (Bossler & Holt, 2013). Law enforcement organizations saw an increase in the use of technology to fight crime, and the policing strategy of community-oriented policing (COP) was introduced in the literature. It was subsequently adopted by many law enforcement agencies to increase police legitimacy in the eyes citizens (Bossler & Holt, 2013). The beating of police officers from the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) of Rodney King on March 3, 1991, was a pivotal event in police history leading to police reform in this era. However, more recent events in America's history have also led to an increase in public outrage of police officer's use of force, specifically on the African-American community. These events include the death of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman in Sanford, Florida on February 26, 2012 and of Michael Brown, who was fatally wounded by former City of Ferguson Police Department Officer Darren Wilson on August 9, 2014 in Missouri (Wolfe & Nix, 2016).

The events in Ferguson created a national media response in the current era of increased police transparency when there is an officer-involved shooting (OIS) (Gross,

2016; MacDonald, 2016a, 2016b; Wolfe & Nix, 2016). The current digital age has increased the national response by allowing citizens to capture police actions on cell phones for upload on the Internet and social networking websites such as YouTube and Facebook (Reilly, 2016). As a result, there are some who rush to judgment without viewing the entire video or knowing the totality of the circumstances surrounding the incident. Instant opinions are made of the officer's actions not only locally, but nationally and internationally. This potentially leads to *de-policing* by law enforcement officers because they do not want to bring so-called embarrassment to themselves, their families, or their employing organization which has been called the Ferguson Effect (Hawkins, 2016; Nix & Wolfe, 2016). There is an increased body of literature aimed at exploring the Ferguson Effect, an increase in violent crime as a result of the Ferguson Effect, and on de-policing of law enforcement agencies as a result of the events in Ferguson (Pyrooz, Decker, Wolfe, & Shjarback, 2016). During my review of the literature, I discovered a gap in exploring the Ferguson Effect in smaller law enforcement agencies.

In this chapter, I will discuss the background of the study, present the problem and purpose statements, and introduce the research problem and methodology. I will also address the research questions and theoretical framework and explain the nature of the study, trustworthiness of the study, and the data analysis technique utilized. I also provide definitions for important terms that could cause confusion to the reader, address assumptions about the Ferguson Effect, and outline the scope, delimitations, and limitations of the study. I conclude with a summary of the chapter's main topics.

Background of the Study

Gill, Weisburd, Telep, Vitter, and Bennett (2014) explored the correlation between an effective law enforcement agency being anchored with trust from the public. Public trust of the police and a mutual understanding of cooperation are pivotal to the success of any law enforcement agency. Nix and Wolfe (2016) posited that there is some empirical evidence to support there is a Ferguson Effect in the United States. The need to explore the Ferguson Effect in smaller police departments was evident in Wolfe and Nix (2016). Pyrooz et al. (2016) offered quantitative empirical evidence that asserted some, if not most police officers, have decided to de-police because of fear of being in the media and embarrassing their organizations. Since the main unit of analysis for this study were individual law enforcement officers and their lived experiences and perceptions, Wolfe and Nix (2016) addressed why the individual police officer was the ideal unit of analysis to explore the Ferguson Effect phenomenon. Wolfe and Piquero (2011) stated that community cooperation was crucial to the success of increased community interaction as a policing strategy. Bossler and Holt (2013) provided a historical perspective of COP which started in the early 1980s because of a call for increased police transparency by the public.

Researchers have found Americans believe what they see in the media without fact-checking the information first, which can lead to inaccurate decisions based on inaccurate information (Donovan & Klahm, 2015). Bossler and Holt (2013) explored the concept of using COP in the paradigm of cyberspace due to an increase in crimes committed on the Internet. Den Heyer and Beckley (2013) offered an international

perspective on the recent demand for police transparency and results indicated citizens from Australia and New Zealand, who also have histories and cultures rooted in the United Kingdom like the United States, have also demanded increase transparency of police in their countries. The United States is a melting pot of cultures, races, ethnicities, and ideas. As such, Roelofse (2013) addressed the need to have a diverse police force that is representative of its citizens.

Problem Statement

The problem this research has explored is how negatively publicized events (Ferguson Effect) and the perceived perceptions of police officers about their own organizational justice affects the manner, if any, in which they practice policing post-Ferguson. Wolfe and Nix (2016) addressed the need for additional research using qualitative methods and for the Ferguson Effect phenomenon to be explored in small police agencies since most of the extant literature has focused on large departments and on crime rates. According to Wolfe and Nix (2016), "The best way to explore the Ferguson Effect is to ask the individual police officer" (p. 3). Scholars do not know if police officers have changed the way they interact with citizens post-Ferguson, especially in smaller law enforcement agencies. My research filled this gap in understanding how negatively publicized events of negative citizen-officer interactions and perceived fairness within the organization have affected the manner, if any, in which officers in small agencies police post-Ferguson.

Most law enforcement organizations practice the policing strategy of COP, which places an emphasis on officer-citizen positive contact, decision making at the lowest

level, and mutual trust and respect between law enforcement and citizens (Gill et al., 2014; Schminke, Arnaud, & Taylor, 2015). Negative media attention and increased oversight by legislatures and the communities law enforcement officers serve could have a negative impact on the effectiveness and core principles of COP (Sinyangwe, 2016). There are currently no known studies which explore officer's attitudes and perceptions of the Ferguson Effect in small law enforcement agencies (Pyrooz et al., 2016; Wolfe & Nix, 2016). Police officers may have decided to decrease the amount of public interaction and cooperation they have with their community due to increased scrutiny of their actions in the media (Nix & Wolfe, 2016).

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of police officers regarding the Ferguson Effect in small police agencies, as well as police officer's perceptions of their own organizational fairness. To address this gap, the approach was qualitative. This qualitative study focused on police officer perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of negative media portrayals and its impact on willingness to interact with the community and perceived fairness within the organization. The participants of the study were active sworn law enforcement officers of police agencies of fewer than 250 officers. The purpose of the study was suited for the qualitative approach because police officer's experiences, opinions, and perceptions are key pieces of rich data in answering the research questions and this valuable data could be lost if a quantitative method were employed.

After an in-depth review of the literature, I developed the following research questions to explore the Ferguson Effect phenomenon in small law enforcement agencies based on the premise that police officers answered the interview questions honestly.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do police officers in small law enforcement agencies perceive negative media coverage?

RQ2: What are police officer's perceptions and experiences on the importance of fairness in police organizations?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical base for this study was Greenberg's (1998) theory of organizational justice. The organizational justice theory incorporates aspects of Adams' (1963) equity theory because the organizational justice theory addresses ways of understanding the relationships between perceived fairness within an organization and subsequent work performance by employees. This framework has been used in business and health industry literature as well as numerous current criminological studies exploring the Ferguson Effect. This includes Wolfe and Nix (2016), who indicated organizational justice was a key correlate of determining police willingness to engage with the community. The approach explores how distributive, interactional, and procedural justice effect the way employees make decisions pertaining to their occupation-specifically the fairness of each. Research and application of Greenberg's theory offers guidance on the application of the two dimensions of reactive-proactive and

process-content, allowing for insight into the daily challenges of decision making by police officers. Fairness and equity are key aspects of a motivated individual.

The organizational justice theory has been used as a theoretical lens to explore the Ferguson Effect phenomenon. Organizations and supervisors who are rated as fairer are likely to gain greater commitment to an organization's goals and not de-police (Wolfe & Nix, 2016). A major part of policing one's community is increased interaction with the public to solve crime. To weave organizational justice in the exploration of the Ferguson Effect, the events in Ferguson and the negative media attention that ensued could be enough to impact police motivation and willingness to partner with the community. A decrease in motivation and willingness to partner with communities is detrimental to the success of COP. Police officers who believe their supervisors and organizations as fair, are least likely to view and observe negative media reports and de-police (Wolfe & Nix, 2016).

Nature of the Study

In this study, I utilized a qualitative methods approach. It involved semistructured telephonic interviews of both active sworn sheriff's deputies and police officers from two police agencies located in southcentral Virginia in conjunction with existing data on the Ferguson Effect and the organizational justice theory. Qualitative research is consistent with understanding how police officers have experienced the Ferguson Effect phenomenon, which is the primary focus of this study. In addition, the qualitative approach is commonly used when exploring a new phenomenon and phenomenology uses the data obtained from participants to understand their lived experiences (Creswell,

2013). As such, the specific approach to be utilized in this study is hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology places emphasis on the lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2013). The rich data gathered from the study were subsequently analyzed in the Computerized-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) of NVivo 11 Pro owned by QSR International.

Definition of Terms

This section includes key terms to be used throughout the study. Other definitions have come from the current literature and other common explanations.

Citizen oversight: Used to convey and address a variety of formal arrangements via formal or informal review into policing issues (Walker, 2016).

Community: Can refer to an actual physical setting like neighborhoods or the concept of place or belonging due to a shared culture or support networks (Gill et al., 2014).

Community-orienting policing (COP): A law enforcement strategy that emphasizes three specific main tenants: community partnerships, organizational transformation, and problem-solving. Traditional models of policing have been thought of as being reactive rather than proactive (Gill et al., 2014).

De-police: Officers, in some way, change the manner in which they practice proactive policing strategies and become more reactive contradictory to his/her normal behavior.

Distributive justice: Concept in the organizational justice theory that posits employees base their evaluations of supervisors on how decisions such as promotions are

distributed evenly throughout the organization and that decisions are not influenced by personal relationships (Nix & Wolfe, 2016).

Ferguson Effect: A concept phenomenon wherein police are placed in higher levels of scrutiny in the media, and officers are subsequently less willing to engage in proactive law enforcement activity (Maguire, Nix, & Campbell, 2016).

Interactional justice: Involves the extent that employees feel they are treated fairly and politely by a supervisor (Nix & Wolfe, 2016).

Negative media: Situation or incident that involves a police officer and a citizen publicized in official, unofficial, or social media outlets that could be viewed unfavorably on the occupation of law enforcement.

Organizational justice: Research that focus on perceptions of fairness to specific aspects of employer decisions on fairness to aspects involving an employee (Cuguerro-Escofet & Fortin, 2014).

Phenomenon: The central concept being examined by the phenomenologist and is the concept being experienced by the participants (Creswell, 2013).

Procedural justice: Thought of in the literature as the most important of the three tenants of organizational justice and posits that organizational decisions and processes are handled in a procedurally fair manner and are not bias in any way (Nix & Wolfe, 2016).

Rural: Rural can be defined as anything that is not urban after defining what urban is. The Census Bureau has used the same definition of urban since the 1890 Census which are incorporated cities and towns with at least 2,500 people (Ratcliffe, Burd, Holder, & Fields, 2016).

Saturation: Term used to articulate that, over the course of the study, participants start to repeat data already collected by the researcher and no new data is provided by the participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Sheriff's deputy: A sworn (oath) individual employed by a local or tribal government whose occupation it is to enforce criminal laws and ordinances. Sheriff deputies oftentimes have the unique mission of running county level jail facilities.

Assumptions

An assumption in my study that cannot be demonstrated to be true is that law enforcement officers answered the interview questions and explained their answers honestly and to the best of their knowledge. This assumption is necessary because it was assumed the spoken data provided by participants was useful for data analysis. A second assumption is that solicited participants were honest in their responses upon recruitment concerning having some knowledge of the phenomenon and/or negative media portrayals of law enforcement officers. This assumption is necessary because, in a phenomenological study, all participants must have experienced the phenomenon, even though they may have experienced the phenomenon through different paradigms.

Scope and Delimitations

This study included both active sworn sheriff's deputies and police officers from two police agencies located in southcentral Virginia whose organizations employ a COP strategy of policing. The aforementioned units of analysis were identified specifically for this study since their lived experiences, perceptions, and opinions help explore how negatively publicized events (Ferguson Effect) and organizational justice perceptions of

police officers, affect the way they practice COP and interact with the communities they police. Participants were required to sign informed consent forms and have been performing law enforcement duties at least one year prior to August 9, 2014. Law enforcement officers of all ranks and supervisory levels were included in participant solicitation. This study was delimited in the form of not including sworn reserve sheriff's deputies or police officers. In addition, State law enforcement, highway patrols, and federal agencies were not included in this study because of the small probability or likelihood of them practicing COP due to their unique law enforcement missions/functions. The exclusion of law enforcement officers who are employed at highway patrols, and federal agencies still allowed transferability.

Limitations

As with any study, there were limitations that need to be addressed. A limitation that I foresaw was generalizability. My phenomenological study was applicable to smaller law enforcement agencies and not larger agencies but does not mean that results could not be used to achieve social change or add to the main body of knowledge. This is an acceptable sacrifice, as the purpose of the study and research questions have been aligned and are focused on small police agencies. Correlative with generalizability, the limitation of transferability is a limitation in this study. Rich and in-depth description of all decisions were expounded upon to allow another researcher the opportunity to replicate the study in the future. In any qualitative research, reliability is oftentimes the first thing that is scrutinized. To aid in the achieving reliability and quality, I utilized

member checking by providing each participant with a copy of their transcribed interview to determine if the transcript was an accurate representation of their lived experiences.

A bias I was cognizant of and that was addressed through dialogic engagement and analytic note-taking is that I am a police officer myself. I separated my work and attempted to remove all residual impact from my research. At work, I am a sworn federal law enforcement officer, but during this study, I was the curious unbiased researcher.

Transferability

The transferability of any qualitative study should be addressed. To address transferability in this study, the setting, participants, and the specifics of the setting were addressed in future chapters. Ravitch and Carl (2016) posited that carefully documenting decisions made by the researcher pertaining to participant selection and the specifics of the settings adds to transferability. Thick description was also utilized to increase transferability of the study. Thick description has been known in the literature to complement a phenomenological study well (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Dependability

To increase the dependability of this study, I tested my data collection tool on one test participant during a pilot study to tailor the interview questions to achieve alignment with the research questions and purpose of the study. Interview questions and the interview guide were vetted by my dissertation chair and methodologist committee member prior to data collection. In addition, Dr. Joseph Maxwell (Maxwell, 2013) graciously provided a critical review of my interview questions during a pilot of my data collection tool (interview guide).

Significance

This research filled a gap in exploring the experiences, attitudes, and opinions of police officers who implement COP in their daily duties to increase the understanding of the Ferguson Effect phenomenon and its impact, if any, on police officer decisions to interact with citizens and the community. The results of this study would add to the empirical evidence to support that the Ferguson Effect exists not only in larger agencies, but smaller agencies as well. The implications for social change include refinement and development of leadership training for police leadership and refinement in organizational policies that support fairness and community engagement and community interaction despite working in a period of increased police scrutiny and accountability. Increased trust and partnership between citizens and the police could lead to fewer unsolved serious crimes due to a lack of tips or cooperation by the community and increased police legitimacy in the eyes of the community which could result in safer communities and a safer society.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the background of the study, presented the problem and purpose statements, and introduced the research problem and methodology. I also addressed the research questions and theoretical framework, and explained the nature of the study, trustworthiness of the study, and the data analysis technique. I also provided definitions for important terms that could cause confusion to the reader and that could not easily be researched to find their meanings, addressed assumptions about the Ferguson

Effect, and outlined the scope, delimitations, and limitations of the study. I concluded with a summary of the chapter's main topics.

In this study, I utilized a hermeneutic phenomenological research approach to interview and analyze information from both active sworn sheriff's deputies and police officers from two police agencies located in southcentral Virginia that utilize the policing strategy of COP regarding their attitudes, opinions, and experiences of negative media portrayals and its impact on willingness to interact with the community and perceived fairness within the organization. In the following chapter, literature review (Chapter 2), an exhaustive review of the extant literature was conducted to show mastery of knowledge of the Ferguson Effect and other aspects of the phenomenon that are of equal importance when discussing de-policing and negative media impacts on policing. The current and relevant literature on this study's theoretical lens and concepts and variables of the Ferguson Effect phenomenon are also discussed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The literature described in this chapter relates to the exploration of the Ferguson Effect phenomenon and the theoretical anchor for this study. The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study is to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of police officers regarding the Ferguson Effect in small police agencies, as well as police officer's perceptions of their own organizational justice. The problem this research explored was how negatively publicized events (Ferguson Effect) and the perceived perceptions of police officers about their own organizational justice affects the manner, if any, in which they practice policing post-Ferguson. The subsequent literature was imported into NVivo 11 Pro to aid in ease of synthesis, increase efficiency, and increase literature review matrix effectiveness. After the literature was found, I imported a portable document format (pdf) file of the literature into NVivo and placed it in its respective node. A node is simply a single point or connection in a network (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Nodes can eventually become points where emerging concepts branch into a network or subtheme (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). I begin this chapter with an overview of the literature research strategy and then provide the basis and historical evolution for my chosen theoretical framework of my study (organizational justice theory). An analysis of key concepts and variables on the Ferguson Effect, COP, organizational justice, crime rates, perceptions of Ferguson protesters, media and social media impact on policing, and police willingness to partner with the community are also explained. The Ferguson Effect phenomenon is a relatively new phenomenon explored in

the literature; therefore, review and synthesis of the foundational aspects and hypotheses of the phenomenon were incorporated into this literature review.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review for this study emphasized the exploration of both qualitative and quantitative peer-reviewed literature on the Ferguson Effect. Supplemental articles pertaining to the organizational justice theory, de-policing, and the media impact on law enforcement were also included in the literature review. The literature review utilized both Walden University and American Military University online libraries as I had continued access to the American Military University's online library as a designated alumnus. I used several databases to search for scholarly articles: EBSCOhost, ProQuest, ProQuest Criminal Justice, ERIC, SAGE Premier, and LexisNexis Academic and Thoreau. As a member of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS), I also conducted direct online access searches of peer-reviewed articles in the *Justice Quarterly* and the *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* which are both published by the ACJS. The keywords I used in the database search engines for peer-reviewed articles included: *Ferguson Effect, organizational justice theory, distributive justice, interactional justice, procedural justice, de-policing, media and crime, media impact on policing, police self-legitimacy, ferguson community, Michael Brown, police shootings, crime rate increase, community-oriented policing, and community policing.*

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical lens for this study was the organizational justice theory. According to Grant and Osanloo (2014), "A theoretical framework is one of the most

important aspects of the research process” (p. 12). When a researcher does not have a theoretical framework, his or her structure and vision are not clear to the reader (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The organizational justice theory is an appropriate blueprint or lens for this study because it emphasizes the value of lived experiences and the value of the perceptions of fairness in the workplace. The organizational justice theory has been applied in the criminal justice literature (Bradford & Quinton, 2014; Myhill & Bradford, 2013; Tankebe & Mesko, 2015). The organizational justice theory is normally explored in the literature by examining the impact of all three components of the organizational justice theory (Cuguero-Escofet & Fortin, 2014) which include: distributive justice, interactional justice, and procedural justice. Distributive justice entails an individual’s perceived fairness of rewards and promotion decisions being distributed evenly throughout the organization. Distributive justice was the main concept of organizational justice explored in the infancy of the organizational justice theory (Greenberg, 1987; Myhill & Bradford, 2013; Nix & Wolfe, 2016). Interactional justice is concerned with the extent to which employees perceive they are treated with dignity and respect by those in positions of authority over them (Greenberg, 1987; Nix & Wolfe, 2016).

Procedural justice posits that individuals identify value on the perceived fairness of both the official and unofficial procedures of an organization that are used to come to a decision (Greenberg, 1987; Nix, Wolfe, Rojek, & Kaminski, 2015). A critical component in the law enforcement profession is that of fairness, whether the fairness takes the form of using officer discretion when making the decision to give an individual a warning for speeding, or fairness in the form of being treated fairly and respectfully by an officer’s

chain of command. The research questions of my study supplement and extend the criminal justice literature that have utilized the organizational justice theory as a theoretical framework. As stated in Chapter 1, the organizational justice theory has been explored in the extant literature as a theoretical lens to explore the Ferguson Effect and has shown that agencies and police managers who treat their employees fairly receive increased dedication to achieving an organization's goals and will not de-police. Deciding on whether or not to de-police is a decision that most police officers have to face on a daily basis (Wolfe & Nix, 2016). The events in Ferguson, and the negative media attention that followed, could be enough to impact police motivation and willingness to partner with the community, thereby being detrimental to the success of policing this generation. Wolfe and Nix (2016) stated police officers who believed their supervisors and organizations as fair were least likely to view and observe negative media reports and de-police.

Organizational Justice Theory Roots

John Stacey Adams' (1963) equity theory is the foundation of the organizational justice theory. John Adams was a well-known workplace and behavioral social scientist. Adams addressed the need to think of fairness or *equity* (p. 422) as something that goes beyond merely getting paid the correct amount of money for the predetermined number of hours worked for the day. Adams defined inequity as "perceived job inputs and/or outcomes that stand psychologically in an obverse relation to what he perceived are the inputs and/or outcomes of another" (p. 424). Adams chose not to use the word *investments* which Homans (1961) defined, rather he coined the term *inputs* and noted

recognition and relevance as two very different characteristics. For example, Adams stated that individuals value the skills they bring in the employee-employer exchange of services such as: education, intelligence, social status, age, and gender.

The outcomes Adams referred to in his work (1963) were the perceived rewards given to an individual by another individual or employer. Some examples of possible outcomes are: pay, recognition, and seniority to name a few. Adams' equity theory has roots in Festinger's (1957) dissonance theory (Adams, 1963). Rather, the employer-employee relationship goes beyond one of economic transaction, to one of an exchange of fairness. The simple suggestion that there is a transaction or exchange between more than one individual already implies that there is a chance that one of the individuals will feel as if the exchange was inequitable (Adams, 1963). The equity theory brought attention to the importance of researching individual perceived fairness.

Adams (1963) conducted an experiment in the form of using two groups of 11 male university students to hand out one-page public opinion interviews to find respondents at a university to try to have an equal number of respondents rank order different types of automobiles. The participant perceptions of what a rising young executive would be expected to drive were explored. During this experiment, Adams tested the hypothesis of when one person is overpaid in relation to another, the person perceived to be underpaid may try to reduce the so-called inequity by increasing their input or their contributions to the economic exchange between the employer and employee. In the experiment, the two groups of 11 male university participants were led to believe they were hired for a real task, and would continue to be employed for two to

three months which most scholars would argue is an unethical practice today. Participants were just employed by Adams for only two and half hours, informed they were actually a part of an experiment, and were subsequently paid for their participation in the study.

One group of male students were informed that even though they were not qualified to receive \$3.50 an hour for the job because they lacked the interviewing skills necessary to perform the job effectively, but would still receive \$3.50 an hour. The second group of male students was led to believe they were qualified to receive the pay rate of \$3.50 because of their education and intelligence levels. Results of the study indicated the group that was led to believe they were not qualified to receive the pay rate attempted to increase their productivity. The second group, who were identified as being “extremely qualified,” did not attempt to overproduce (Adams, 1963).

Organizational Justice Theory

Grounded in Adams’ (1963) research on equity, or rather inequity, Jerald Greenberg (1987) stated there were different emerging approaches to justice that were making their way in academia and in the peer-reviewed literature from the 1960s and 1970s. These newly emerging justice approaches were thought to be able to explain behavior in the broader organizational settings, and not just at the mid-level manager/employee paradigm (Greenberg, 1987). Greenberg was a tenured professor at the Ohio State University when he authored “A Taxonomy of organizational justice theories” for publication. More proactive explanations of perceived fairness of justice in organizations appeared to take center stage in the 1970s and 1980s. In addition, a shift in

the paradigm from content-oriented to process-oriented explanations of organizational justice occurred in the 1980s (Greenberg, 1987).

Two dimensions were identified that were conceptually independent of each other, which were the reactive-proactive dimension and the process-content dimension (Greenberg, 1987). Greenberg credited the use of the reactive-proactive dimension as being manifested in Van Avermaet, McClintock, and Moskowitz (1978). Greenberg credited the second dimension of process-content to Walker, Lind, and Thibaut (1979). “A process approach to justice focuses on how various outcomes (in organizations, pay, and recognition) are determined” (Greenberg, 1987, p. 10). Reactive content theories attempt to emphasize human reactions of being treated unfairly (Greenberg, 1987). Proactive content theories usually aim at exploring and conceptualizing how employees, or those that work, attempt to change or manipulate the *status quo* and outcomes (Greenberg, 1987). An example of the concept of proactive theories is that an individual will alter his or her work performance commensurate on the balance of the rewards to the provided contribution of service because it is the fairest type of transaction for everyone involved.

Greenberg stated he was personally dissatisfied with the rigidity of the use Adams’ equity theory in exploring organizational justice because of the equity theory’s restricted range of topics it addressed. Greenberg lived in a time where individuals were concerned with more than how much an individual was paid for work performance, but was also concerned with areas in the workplace that were not readily identifiable or able to be quantified. Greenberg saw a shift from an emphasis of reactivity to more

process-oriented theories that placed an emphasis on perceptions and conceptualization. These topics ranged from grievance procedures to evaluation policies (Greenberg, 1987). Greenberg (1987) indicated the equity theory simply lost its applicability to the current scholarly needs of the era. As with any preliminary theory, the equity theory was used as the foundation for the organizational justice theory, but Adams' work should not be minimized, as it started a conversation amongst scholars of the need to address fairness in the organizational setting. Greenberg did give credit to the referent cognitions theory which places division between two types of reactions: some based on feelings of dissatisfaction, and some rooted in the beliefs about what should have happened which can lead to feelings of strain, stress, and resentment. These feelings were also noted consequences of inequity by John Adams.

The current conversation on the organizational justice theory has also been explored in a myriad of fields to include the social sciences, business, and nursing literature. Schminke, Arnaud, and Taylor (2015) stated most studies incorporating the organizational justice theory as a theoretical lens have focused on exploring individual attitudes and opinions of work-related behaviors. There has been increased interest by researchers in exploring justice, specifically at the collective level. Schminke et al. (2015) focused on moral values perceptions and indicated the current conversation on the organizational justice theory changed from individual perceptions of justice to those that appear to explore aggregate or collective justice perceptions. There is currently a gap in the literature in organizational justice in regard to offering empirical perspectives of overall justice (Schminke et al., 2015).

An individual's values and experiences oftentimes serve as the basis of forming his or her justice lens in what they view as fair or not unfair. In the same vein, collective values of an organization are correlative to collective justice judgments. In one study, 652 employees from 114 departments that were a part of 101 total organizations were surveyed. Results indicated the collective perceptions of ethical values were statistically significant correlated to procedural justice and overall justice (Schminke et al., 2015). The need to explore where collective values originate from was identified as a future implication of research, as well as the need for more empirical and theoretical studies that explore which values, at the individual level and justice perceptions, appear at the collective level (Schminke et al., 2015).

Organizational Justice in Criminal Justice Literature

Procedural Justice

The literature is not short of empirical studies that have utilized the organizational justice theory as a theoretical lens (Madan & Nalla, 2015; Mazerolle, Bennett, Antrobus, & Egging, 2012; Mazerolle, Bennett, Davis, Sargeant, & Manning, 2013). Patten, Caudill, Bor, Thomas, and Anderson (2015) stated most of the criminal justice literature has focused on examining police departments and prisons or jails, but there have not been many studies that have utilized the organizational justice theory as a theoretical lens in sheriff's offices. "Research has shown that commitment to procedural justice during citizens' interactions is partially a product of officers' perceptions of organizational justice" (Tankebe, 2014, p. 25; Wolfe & Nix, 2016). The organizational justice theory has been used to explore police misconduct, acceptance of community policing, job stress,

and job satisfaction (Bradford, Quinton, Myhill, & Porter, 2014; Lambert & Hogan, 2013; Patten, Caudill, Bor, Thomas, & Anderson, 2015). Patten et al. (2015) conducted quantitative research of a sheriff's office in California to study the impact of Assembly Bill 109 (AB109), which fundamentally altered the California criminal justice system in an effort to decrease prison overcrowding. As a result of the bill being passed, the Golden County Sheriff's Office (GCSO) implemented the use of an electronic custody supervision (ECS) strategy as a rehabilitation strategy. ECS was created in response to an increased need to monitor offenders more effectively as the older model utilized in Golden County involved one sheriff's deputy visiting offenders sentenced to home arrest. History has shown that when a major program change is completed without feedback from stakeholders, there is sometimes reluctance to support the program. The ECS was created without exploring the attitudes and opinions of stakeholders and Patten et al. (2015) explored the perceptions of organizational justice related to the creation of the program.

Patten et al. (2015) expanded the current understanding of the organizational justice theory in a sheriff's office, which was important to my study as a sheriff's office was a key setting of my research. Survey results indicated that sheriff's deputy respondents were optimistic that the ECS program would enhance the public's safety and 87% of deputies believed the ECS program was necessary, and they were prepared to actually implement the program despite not being given the opportunity to develop the program (Patten et al., 2015). Of interest, Patten et al. (2015) indicated lower ranking personnel were more likely to have a negative perception of the ECS program than mid-

level managers or other individuals with higher rank or positions in the chain of command. The results confirmed that creating a program without first involving all stakeholders in the decision-making process could result in a lack of support for the program or policy. Patten et al. (2015) has direct implications in my research because it addressed the need that all stakeholders should be informed about decisions that will directly impact them, and filled a gap in the criminal justice literature that utilized the organizational justice theory—specifically procedural justice. Nix and Wolfe (2016) advocated organizational justice be used in all police departments because the benefits from it have second and third-order impacts on the street. The literature is full of examples of how law enforcement agencies have made policies as a result of an increased demand for transparency by the community, and such department or agency policies are only discussed with upper-level management personnel.

Organizational Justice and Managing Officers

Nix, Wolfe, Rojek, and Kaminski (2015) conducted research to determine if citizen perceptions of police trustworthiness were shaped by respondent neighborhood conditions. Nix et al. (2015) argued scholars spent a great deal of time and attention to the sources and end results of legitimacy, but trust remained largely unexplored. The study utilized mail surveys from a random sample of citizens from a mid-sized area in the southeastern United States, and used a different paradigm than Patten et al. (2015) because the study went beyond prior process-based models of research that explored legitimacy and addressed a gap in the literature by exploring the extent to which procedural justice evaluations were associated with trust in the police. Nix, Wolfe, Rojek,

and Kaminski (2015) as well as Mesko, Hacin, and Eman, (2014) focused on analyzing the predictors of trust in the police, and specifically attempted to determine if perceptions of neighborhood collective-efficacy had an impact on citizen's level of trust in the police after addressing evaluations for procedural justice. Results indicated individuals who believed more informal social controls and social cohesion exist (self-efficacy) within the areas in which they resided, were more likely to perceive the police as exercising their authority in a procedurally fair manner; people who believe police officers unfairly distributed outcomes to the public (i.e., based on bias) were less likely to view police actions as procedurally fair, and a perception by citizens—in the form of seeing visible signs of disorder in a neighborhood—could lead one to believe the police are not doing their jobs and therefore, cannot be fully trusted by the community (Nix et al., 2015). Results of the study also indicated perceived collective efficacy partially shaped levels of trust among citizens, but when procedural justice, as a variable, is addressed and accounted for, the perceived collective efficacy was largely mediated (Nix et al., 2015). Future research implications included accounting for macro-level and perceptual indicators of neighborhood context on evaluation of police.

Myhill and Bradford (2013) offered empirical evidence to support Nix et al. (2015) and Patten et al. (2015) via a different, but very similar country of the United Kingdom. Police policy in the United Kingdom, as well as the United States, has shown to be taken from the community, neighborhood, and reassurance paradigms (Myhill & Bradford, 2013). “Senior police managers have stressed that officers need to reconnect with the public, develop strong links with communities, and move toward process-based

policing” (Myhill & Bradford, 2013, p. 338). Myhill and Bradford (2013) explored how police managers might be able to influence *cop culture* that may not necessarily be in the best interests of the law enforcement organization and the community, and focused on ways to improve communication procedures between management and employees that aligned with organizational goals. Of particular interest in my study, Myhill and Bradford (2013) identified a gap in the literature which needed to be filled by exploring how procedurally fair treatment of police officers and staff by police organizations affect the behavior, or have had a perceived impact on police officer’s behavior toward citizens. The study also supported my decision to explore the relationship between organizational justice and the likelihood of law enforcement officers to participate in activities such as community engagement (Myhill & Bradford, 2013).

In addition, Myhill and Bradford (2013) found no other studies attempted to explore the potential impact of organizational justice on police officers’ attitudes to change or support programs such as COP and officer’s attitudes toward serving the public. Results indicated that organizational justice was associated with a positive attitude toward serving the community, and this relationship was anchored in a commitment to the foundational elements of COP (Myhill & Bradford, 2013). The events in Ferguson have been coined a *crossroads* in American policing (Weitzer, 2015). A limitation of Weitzer (2015), and this study, is that the data used was self-reported and not something that could be objectively measured.

Review of the Literature

Ferguson Effect and Crime Rates

Since the events in Ferguson, criminal justice scholars have been eager to determine what effect, if any, the events involving Michael Brown and Officer Wilson have caused a national shockwave, not only in the neighboring city of St. Louis, but as a nation in general. The events in Ferguson also kindled a discussion by scholars to increase the dialogue on so-called police militarization (Dansky, 2016). Decker, Wolfe, and Shjarback, (2016) conducted one of the most comprehensive reviews of crime rates in large U.S. cities to explore the Ferguson Effect phenomenon, and offered very important empirical evidence on the Ferguson Effect. Pyrooz et al. (2016) addressed the need to explore possible de-policing by the police, as the events in Ferguson could have caused a law enforcement legitimacy crisis—and if there was a police legitimacy crisis—it has not impacted violent crime in the United States. One of the pivotal influences on the quality of life of citizens in the United States has been crime (Pyrooz et al., 2016). One of the very first things an individual may think about when deciding to purchase a home or move to a different location—besides checking the quality of the education system—is reviewing the crime rates in the area. Being deemed as a bad crime area can have significant economic impact on the community because no one will want to live in a community that is dangerous to not only themselves, but their family as well.

The United States has had a steady decline in crime rates since the 1990s (Pyrooz et al., 2016). Pyrooz et al. (2016) posited the Ferguson Effect phenomenon could be a result of three hypotheses:

1. Police have decided to de-police because of negative media attention pertaining to police behavior.
2. Escalating events such as in Ferguson have led the public to believe justice is not being administered adequately across the community, especially the African-American community, and legitimacy of the law should be questioned.
3. The declination in crimes rates in the United States since the 1990s were destined to increase, and the events in Ferguson had nothing to do with an alleged increase in crime rates in the United States.

Sinyangwe (2016) argued against there even being a Ferguson Effect phenomenon, and called upon scholars to stop future research of the phenomenon in the literature. The study explored whether or not crime trends changed after the OIS of Michael Brown in Ferguson (Pyrooz et al., 2016). 81 cities in the United States with populations over 200,000 citizens and their respective Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Part I crimes were included in the study. Part I crimes consist of offenses of violence such as criminal homicide, forcible rape, and robbery. Results indicated that prior to the events in Ferguson, crime was decreasing for a 12-month period, and after the Ferguson shooting, there was not a “systematic” change in crime and results were not statistically significant; the only indicator of a rise in crime after the events in Ferguson was that of the crime of robbery (Pyrooz et al., 2016). Citizens, the police, and elected officials are all susceptible to the ever-evolving effects of the utilization of social media by the public. “The killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO appears to have sparked a social process, reinforced

by repetitive mentions of the Ferguson Effect in social and other media by political and law enforcement leaders” (Pyrooz, Decker, Wolfe, & Shjarback, 2016, p. 5). When police and municipality leaders make policy decisions based off of rhetoric and political pressure, and not empirical evidence, results could be catastrophic. Spending tax dollars on unnecessary reforms and studies is one example of the price of making decisions based off of nonempirically grounded evidence (Den Heyer & Beckley, 2013). Porter and Prenzler (2012) posited an unprecedented number of local governments have increased police oversight efforts, not only in the United States but across the world.

Perceptions of Protesters in Ferguson

The literature on the Ferguson Effect is scarce in qualitative method studies that explore the Ferguson Effect. One important qualitative study that explored the Ferguson Effect was Cobbina, Owusu-Bempah, and Kimberly (2016). Cobbina et al. (2016) explored the perceptions of protesters who were active in Ferguson, MO after a grand jury did not return a *true bill* or find there probable cause to send Officer Wilson’s OIS to trial. The variable of race is one of the most common demographic characteristics associated with individual’s perceptions of crime (Cobbina et al., 2016; Pickett, Chiricos, Golden, & Gertz, 2012). Race is also associated with an individual’s perception or attitude toward his or her experiences with the police (Cobbina et al., 2016). Most of the literature that has attempted to explore citizen attitudes toward the police have focused on the lived experiences of ethnic groups not saturated with African-American respondents or participants (Cobbina et al., 2016; Ghandoosh, 2014). Cobbina et al. (2016) filled an

important gap in the literature which explored the perceptions of African-Americans of the events in Ferguson.

In-depth semistructured qualitative interviews were conducted with both African-American and Caucasian adults who identified as participating in protests after a grand jury did not to indict Officer Wilson, and as being a part of the Ferguson, MO community (Cobbina et al., 2016). 81 participants were interviewed, which is a large number of interviews for a qualitative study. The participants from the study were diverse in male and female participants, had ages that ranged from 18 to 65, and included 75 African-Americans and six Caucasian participants. Participants were asked if they thought African-Americans were more or less likely to be involved in criminal activity than their Caucasian counterparts. 56% of participants perceived crime was committed proportionally by both African-Americans and Caucasians. An interesting result in Cobbina et al. (2016) was that a good portion of participants (36%) perceived African-Americans were more likely to commit petty crimes than Caucasians. Pivotal to an important variable in my study, are individual's perceptions of the media portrayal of crime (El-enany, 2015).

One of the hypotheses of the Ferguson Effect is that law enforcement officers have chosen to de-police because of a fear of being negatively portrayed in the media. "It should be noted that our respondents did not view police discrimination as an isolated phenomenon" (Cobbina et al., 2016, p. 225). Although the Ferguson Effect has not been explored in smaller law enforcement agencies, the phenomenon is perceived to not be confined to large cities, and could be found in smaller law enforcement agencies as well

as large ones and warrants future research efforts. Cobbina et al. (2016) stated 7 of 81 participants—who were all African-American—perceived media was responsible for enhancing the Ferguson Effect because African-Americans were stereotyped in the media as being predisposed to violence and were violent in nature.

56% of respondents in Cobbina et al. (2016) indicated African-Americans were considered as “culpable” (p. 220) criminals by law enforcement officers. This finding is significant in that over half of the total respondents in the study had a negative or decreased perception of police legitimacy since the events in Ferguson, which was further echoed in Tankebe (2013). A decrease in legitimacy of the police by citizens can lead to an “us vs them” mentality which degrades policing efforts in the community and divides the police, and the people they are supposed to protect, the citizens. An “us vs them” mentality can also lead to an adversarial paradigm amongst citizens and the police which is expounded upon later in the next section of this chapter (Maguire, Nix, & Campbell, 2016). When citizens consider the police as bias, this can result in civil unrest and mass public demonstration by the community which researchers have stated was one of the main kindling aspects of the OIS involving Michael Brown and Officer Darren Wilson (Nix & Wolfe, 2016).

Ferguson Effect and Its Impact on U.S. Police Officer Deaths

It is important to address the Ferguson Effect and the impact, if any, it has had in law enforcement officer deaths in the United States. As an aggregate, the number of police officers killed during the performance of their duties has been on a constant decline (Maguire, Nix, & Campbell, 2016). A major premise of the Ferguson Effect is

that society has begun to perceive the police occupation as less legitimate than in the pre-Ferguson era. Maguire et al. (2016) conducted a quantitative method study in an attempt to determine if the Ferguson Effect effected the number of police officer deaths in the United States. Maguire et al. (2016) echoed the consensus among criminal justice scholars in the literature which is that police agencies are currently in a legitimacy crisis because of publicized negative media portals of incidents where police officers have to use force to protect themselves or the community, to include deadly force. Data from the Officer Down Memorial Page (ODMP) was analyzed utilizing time series analysis and results indicated, contrary to popular belief, the Ferguson Effect has had no effect on the number of police officers killed in the line of duty (Maguire et al., 2016).

Maguire et al. (2016) further identified the need in de-policing research. The ODMP accounts for all police officer line-of-duty deaths. Because there is currently a demand for increased police transparency whenever force of any kind is used against someone, and an apparent lack of police legitimacy by the public, police officers could be hesitating to use deadly force even when it is warranted. Hesitation would make the murder rate of police officers increase (James, James, & Vila, 2016; Maguire et al., 2016). A validity concern in Maguire et al. (2016) is that the data collected by the ODMP could not be scrutinized for accuracy because the federal government does not publish a report of line of duty deaths very often, and when the data is collected, it is not appropriate for empirical analysis (Kuhns, Dolliver, Bent, & Maguire, 2016).

Willingness to Engage With Community Post-Ferguson

While reviewing the extant literature on the Ferguson Effect, I was mainly influenced and inspired to explore my research questions and problem statement for this study from Wolfe and Nix (2016), which was a pivotal study in exploration of the Ferguson Effect. Wolfe and Nix (2016) addressed the Ferguson Effect from a different paradigm, and chose not to focus so much on whether crime rates increased, or what I have coined as the *inter-Ferguson Effect*, as a result of the events in Ferguson and other events across the nation (Pyrooz, Decker, Wolfe, & Shjarback, 2016) or how citizens viewed the actions of police officers (Cobbina, Owusu-Bempah, & Kimberly, 2016). Instead they explored the Ferguson Effect at the micro-level, or what I have coined the *intra-Ferguson Effect*, to determine if the events in Ferguson was associated with de-policing or “self-preservation” by police officers. Haberfeld (2013) stated “the Community Policing Consortium provided training that encouraged police supervisors to diagnose a police officer’s ability and willingness to perform a task...and to assess the best level of relationship and tasks behavior to apply in a situation” (p. 86).

Wolfe and Nix (2016) further utilized the organizational justice theory as a theoretical lens to determine if the Ferguson Effect was evident in police officer willingness to partner with the community. A finding was that police officers who perceived their agencies and law enforcement leadership as fair were more willing to partner with the community and continue to do their jobs effectively, despite the possibility of becoming the center of the next viral video on social media (Wolfe & Nix, 2016). An unintended consequence of increased scrutiny of police officers is that police

officers will de-police, which could be an explanation for an apparent increase in crime. Even though most of the literature on the Ferguson Effect has indicated the Ferguson Effect phenomenon has not led to an increase in higher crime rates in major United States cities—and has not led to more police killings in the United States—does not necessarily mean there is not a Ferguson Effect. The Ferguson Effect could not be directly measurable utilizing quantitative methods and statistical analysis, rather, is present in other areas of police work, especially in regard to COP and willingness to interact with the community (Wolfe & Nix, 2016).

Wolfe and Nix (2016) utilized quantitative methods and also addressed a gap in the literature identified by Patten, Caudill, Bor, Thomas, and Anderson (2015) which was utilizing sheriff deputies as the units of analysis. Pertaining to the variable of self-legitimacy, Bottoms and Tankebe (2012) posited that those in positions of power, such as the police and sheriff deputies, have to convince themselves the power they have is in-fact legitimate before they can truly claim legitimacy in the eyes of citizens. A limitation of Wolfe and Nix (2016) is that it was restricted to a single law enforcement agency. The limitation of utilizing only one law enforcement agency was not a limitation of this study because two separate law enforcement agencies with a varying number (51-121) of law enforcement officers agreed to participate in this study. Wolfe and Nix (2016) administered surveys to sheriff deputies wherein organizational justice, the Ferguson Effect, willingness to partner with the community, and self-legitimacy were all variables explored (Wolfe & Nix, 2016) and were also concepts and variables in my research questions. Multiple regression results indicated deputies who were more confident about

their authority supported the idea of COP (Wolfe & Nix, 2016). “Community engagement is a function of officers’ confidence in their authority and how fairly they believe they are treated by supervisors” (Wolfe & Nix, 2016, p. 8).

Community-Oriented Policing (COP)

An important principle that is worthy of addressing for my study is COP. The literature supported a diverse corps of police in the community to strengthen the effectiveness and legitimacy of policing the community (Bossler & Holt, 2013; Ferrandino, 2014; Gill, Weisburd, Telep, Vitter, & Bennett, 2014; Roelofse, 2013; Roh, Dae-Hoon, & Kim, 2013). Jenkins (2016) stated community policing “is an organizational strategy that leaves setting priorities and the means of achieving them largely to residents and the police who serve in their neighborhoods...[It] is a ‘process’ rather than a product” (p. 222). Law enforcement agencies have been using the COP strategy for more than 30 years (Bossler & Holt, 2013).

COP is more than a policing strategy, rather, COP is much like a theoretical framework for a dissertation or any other scholarly paper because it can also be used as the blueprint for police agencies in the way they operate. The way a police department is structured to include police operations (Bossler & Holt, 2013), where police officers spend their time patrolling their beats (Bossler & Holt, 2013; Jenkins, 2016) and what they do while they are performing law enforcement duties (Roelofse, 2013), and how police officers are evaluated (Bossler & Holt, 2013) are all interconnected to the policing strategy of COP. Law enforcement agencies should be careful to not just use the

language of COP (Gill et al., 2014), rather, actually develop the strategy within their organizations.

Other key principles of COP as stated by Jenkins (2016) compared to other explanations in the literature were:

a commitment to broadly focused, problem-oriented policing; organizational decentralization; informal, two-way channels of communication between police and citizens; police working with citizens to determine what are local problems and priorities; and a commitment to helping neighborhoods help themselves by organizing education efforts (p. 222).

COP has been empirically shown to have more of an impact on crime and crime reduction efforts of law enforcement agencies (Bossler & Holt, 2013; Gill, Weisburd, Telep, Vitter, & Bennett, 2014) because there has been a call for a greater voice in the community (Boels & Verhage, 2016; Bull, 2015; Caputo & McIntyre, 2015; Martin & Chan, 2014; Perez & Bromley, 2015; Walker, 2016). Jenkins (2016) focused on a current gap in the literature and explored police officers' perceptions on their views and beliefs of the COP strategy in order to gauge their *buy in* (Roussell, 2015; Sun, Jianhong, & Farmer, 2016; Telep & Weisburd, 2014) pertaining to the basic principles of COP. Results indicated police detectives and investigators appeared to not support COP compared to street officers, and most police officers were prone to want a hybrid model of policing (Kasali, & Odetola, 2016; Santos & Taylor, 2014) which incorporated principles of COP with more traditional proactive policing (Jenkins, 2016). Results also

indicated the higher the rank in the organization, the higher the support for COP there was (Jenkins, 2016).

Because more and more police agencies today are having to combat crime on the Internet and in cyberspace, Bossler and Holt (2013) explored police officer attitudes and predictors of support for utilizing COP in online environments. One usually cannot find an individual who does not have a smart phone (mobile device) and Internet access at his or her fingertips. The ease of getting access to the Internet and the prevalent use of social media applications on mobile devices is one specific reason why some OIS videos have become viral so quickly. Once a video is posted on the Internet, it is usually posted forever, unless it is taken down by the individual who uploaded it or if a network administrator of the social networking sites removes the video because it was reported or violates the terms of use. Two of the main variables identified, which impacted support for online COP, were support for COP in the real world and individual police officer views of the seriousness of cybercrimes (Bossler & Holt, 2013). Contrary to popular belief, the computer proficiency level of the police officer respondents had no statistical significance on the decision to support COP in online environments.

Media and Social Media Impact on Policing

I would be remised if I did not explain what has appeared in the literature pertaining to social and mainstream media and one of the main assumptions of the Ferguson Effect. One of the premises of the Ferguson Effect, and an assumption found in my research questions, is police officers have chosen to de-police because they do not want to be individually responsible in embarrassing their organizations, their families,

and even being held criminally or civil liable for having to use force—to include deadly force—in an encounter with a citizen (Nix & Wolfe, 2016). The power of social media was evident in Potter, Matsa, and Mitchell (2013) and Surette (2013) which suggested local television and news audiences have steadily been decreasing in popularity, especially among young viewers. The use of social media among police officers, specifically Twitter, has increased and the literature suggested social media use can increase police legitimacy of citizens because its' use shows the police have nothing to hide and are attempting to be transparent (Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2015). Grimmelikhuijsen and Meijer (2015) added validity to one of the principles of COP (two-way channels of communication) as evident in Jenkins (2016).

There are few empirical studies in the literature that have explored the impact of media and police self-legitimacy except for Nix and Wolfe (2015). Nix and Wolfe identified this gap in the literature, and were found to be prominent researchers and the emerging experts in exploring the Ferguson Effect and utilizing the theoretical framework of organizational justice correlative to the Ferguson Effect. Nix and Wolfe (2015) recently conducted a quantitative study of survey data from 567 police officers to explore negative media publicity and police self-legitimacy: Results of the study indicated law enforcement officers who felt less motivated because they viewed negative publicity had less self-legitimacy. “Self-legitimacy is defined as the confidence they have in their authority” (Nix & Wolfe, 2017, p. 84). Nix and Wolfe (2015) lauded Bradford and Quinton (2014) and Tankebe and Mesko (2015) and offered empirical evidence to

support Nix and Wolfe (2015) in that citizen's perceptions of the police can change police officer's self-legitimacy or confidence in their authority.

Bottoms and Tankebe (2012) utilized a dialogic model of procedural justice that would lead one to believe that police officer's self-legitimacy could be weakened if negative publicity seen by police officers was perceived as a lack of community support. Negative publicity and the constant criticism of police officers could lead to less motivation to perform their duties (Braga, Winship, Tyler, Fagan, & Meares, 2014; Khan, Shakoor, Aziz, & Latafat, 2015; Lee & Gibbs, 2015; Lim, 2015; Nix & Wolfe, 2017; Sela-shavovitz, 2015; Wu, 2014). Police officers who have less confidence in their authority to perform their duties could be less prone to practice procedural justice while performing their duties (Bradford & Quinton, 2014; Nix & Wolfe, 2017) which could have significant negative effects on the effectiveness of policing. Procedural justice is a key concept of COP and key in being perceived as legitimate by the community (Jackson, Bradford, Stanko, & Hohl, 2012; Mazerolle, Bennett, Davis, Sargeant, & Manning, 2013; Nix, Wolfe, Rojek & Kaminski, 2015).

Results of Nix and Wolfe (2017) also indicated respondent's (sheriff deputies) perceptions of negative publicity hindered officer motivation, and was associated with lower self-legitimacy. Deputies who perceived their organization and the distribution of outcomes to employees as fair, behaved in a procedurally fair manner and treated employees with respect and dignity, as opposed to deputies who viewed themselves as having more legitimacy than those who did not. The results of Nix and Wolfe expanded the current literature and offered empirical evidence to support further research in the

form of my study of exploring negative media or negative publicity on police willingness to interact with the public in small law enforcement agencies. “Even if focused on events far removed from an officer’s jurisdiction, the negative publicity is associated with a lack of confidence in law enforcement authority” (Nix & Wolfe, 2017, p. 100).

What people observe on the television and on social media are both important variables and factors in forming citizens’ views about the police and the criminal justice system as a whole (Donovan & Klahm, 2015). Police officers are only a small part of the criminal justice system, but are oftentimes the first individuals citizens encounter as part of the system. Donovan and Klahm (2015) stated the majority of the extant literature has focused on the impact of news—especially local news—but identified and explored a gap in the literature related to crime dramas and entertainment shows. Donovan and Klahm (2015) indicated when individuals watch crime dramas, they are more likely to believe police are effective in reducing crime in the community. The police only use force when absolutely necessary, and police do not generally obtain false confessions—and even if the police used unacceptable tactics to obtain a statement—the suspect being questioned would not provide a false confession. All results in the study utilized multivariate regression analysis.

Donovan and Klahm (2015) was also an important reminder that the narrative on police legitimacy and fairness can change at any moment. Harnessing the analytical power of NVivo 11 Pro, I conducted a query of the 10 most frequently used words in the current literature on the Ferguson Effect and COP as illustrated in the word cloud in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Results of an NVivo word query (COP & Ferguson Effect Nodes). The word cloud was created utilizing the nodes created during the literature review process on the Ferguson Effect and COP. The words of “crime” and “community” were at the forefront of the analysis.

Summary

The subsequent literature was imported into NVivo 11 Pro to aid in ease of synthesis, increase efficiency, and increased literature review matrix effectiveness. I began this chapter with an overview of the literature research strategy and then provided the basis and historical evolution for my chosen theoretical framework of my study (organizational justice theory). I provided an analysis of key concepts and variables on the Ferguson Effect, COP, organizational justice, crime rates, perceptions of Ferguson protesters, media and social media impact on policing, and police willingness to partner with the community. The Ferguson Effect phenomenon is a relatively new phenomenon

explored in the literature; therefore, I reviewed and synthesized key components of the phenomenon in this literature review. An exhaustive review of the extant literature was explained to show mastery of knowledge of the Ferguson Effect and other aspects of the phenomenon that are of equal importance when discussing de-policing and negative media impacts on policing. In the following chapter, research method (Chapter 3), I expounded upon the historical roots and research traditions of phenomenology, described my role as the researcher, provide an overview of the methodology of my study, addressed trustworthiness, and concluded Chapter 3 with a brief summary.

Conclusions

The events in Ferguson, MO started a conversation in the literature as to the validity of the Ferguson Effect phenomenon, since the phenomenon was first coined by powerful officials in the United States to include the President of the United States and the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The current consensus in the literature is that the events in Ferguson have not had an impact on the apparent increase in violent crime in major U.S. cities, and that the phenomenon has not led to an increase in police officer line-of-duty deaths in the U.S. There has been an identified need by scholars for researchers to explore the Ferguson Effect at the micro-level because the extant literature does not support a claim that the events in Ferguson were solely responsible for a perceived increase in crime rates at the macro-level; the only crime that increased as a result of the Ferguson Effect was the crime of robbery, and even this crime only saw meniscal statistical significance in the literature.

Police are currently in an era like no other where every incident involving force could be uploaded onto social media networks or e-mailed to local news agencies. The literature has shown the threat of being the center of the next viral video has caused law enforcement officers to de-police. De-policing can be detrimental in increasing community cooperation and citizen perception of legitimacy of police work. There is also empirical evidence to support the Ferguson Effect phenomenon is not an isolated phenomenon and is worthy to be explored in smaller police agencies or sheriff's departments that have not had to deal with negative publicity or a negative event that has gone public or viral in the media. Police officer perceptions of organizational justice were shown to be a prominent theoretical lens in the literature exploring the Ferguson Effect phenomenon, police self-legitimacy, public attitudes toward the police, and police decisions to de-police.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of police officers regarding the Ferguson Effect in small police agencies, as well as police officer's perceptions of their own organizational justice. In this chapter, I provide the history and description of phenomenology—specifically, hermeneutic phenomenology. The research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, and issues of trustworthiness were explained and this chapter will conclude with a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

I developed the following research questions to explore the central phenomenon of the study (Ferguson Effect) in small law enforcement agencies based on the premise that police officers answered the interview questions honestly. A review of the literature indicated there were no peer-reviewed literature specifically addressing the Ferguson Effect using solely qualitative methods. The organizational justice theoretical lens was also addressed during the construction of the research questions.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do police officers in small law enforcement agencies experience negative media coverage?

RQ2: What are police officer's perceptions and experiences on the importance of fairness in police organizations?

Phenomenology

Edmund Husserl, traditionally known as a mathematician, was known as being the founder of phenomenology (Butler, 2016; Husserl, 1965, 1982, 1983) which ultimately asks the question of “what is this experience like” (Lavery, 2003, p. 22) as appeared through the consciousness via an epistemological point-of-view. Butler (2016) stated a common problem for new researchers conducting qualitative studies, specifically phenomenology studies, was the literature was full of many different definitions of Husserl’s work. Van Manen (1984) stated phenomenology was a “deep questioning of something which restores an original sense of what it means to be a thinker, a researcher, and a theorist” (p. 38). Phenomenology provides a means to observe individual and personal epistemological realities as they arise from their unique “perceptions” (Butler, 2016, p. 2013).

Epistemology can be defined as how we gain knowledge of our varying ideas about reality (Maxwell, 2013; Reiners, 2012). Consistent with a key variable of my research, negative media, epistemologies of law enforcement officers did vary. Ravitch and Carl (2016) defined epistemology as concerning the nature of knowledge to include how it is constructed. This echoes Creswell (2013) who stated it was important to conduct studies in the “field” (p. 20) where participants live and work. Phenomenology also describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Jeong & Othman, 2016; Johnson, 2016; Reason, Boyd, & Reason, 2016; Sum & Shi, 2016; Reiners, 2012). Since the purpose of my study was to explore the Ferguson Effect in smaller police departments—specifically

between police officers and sheriff deputies—phenomenology is more appropriate than other qualitative methods such as narrative research, grounded theory research, ethnographic research, or case study research.

There are typically two terms that can be found in phenomenological studies first used by Husserl which are *epoche* (Reiners, 2012; Sousa, 2014) and *bracketing* (Chan, Yuen-ling, & Wai-tong, 2013). Moustakas (1994) used the terms epoche and bracketing synonymously and as two concurrent processes, and indicated a researcher should read the transcripts of qualitative interviews to better understand the meaning and intention of the spoken data and to fully comprehend it. Epoche has been explained as something that hinders the phenomenon from being explored or blocked (Butler, 2016; Reiners, 2012) and to effectively conduct a phenomenological study, one has to intentionally disrupt the tendency to include personal assumptions of the interpretations of the experiences which include the perceptions of the participants in the study (Butler, 2016). It should be noted, however, that themes that emerge from a phenomenological study offer only one interpretation of an experience, and this interpretation may vary by the individual researcher and should be expected to change if a study is replicated (van Manen, 1984).

Human beings tend to retreat to their personal experiences, as Husserl (1982) stated, “we make a new beginning, each for himself and in himself...,” (p. 6) which emphasizes the extreme personal context of epoche. A qualitative researcher must be able to separate themselves from their personal beliefs and preconceived assumptions and must be an objective observer (Butler, 2016). Butler (2016) stated Husserl continually evolved phenomenology and he had the pattern of continually restating the

“epistemological and ontological foundations of his philosophy” (p. 2034) but did not elaborate and provide a succinct summary of his thinking. Butler (2016) also indicated epoche was unique in phenomenological studies because even though it is used in the data collections and analysis phases of a qualitative study, it is unique to the researcher because he or she has to know oneself and know what will work to cleanse their own mind so as to not have radical assumptions.

Husserl (1983) stated that the researcher who conducts a phenomenological study should approach the world with the conviction to “alter it radically” (p. 2035). Bracketing is the process within epoche that places an emphasis on the continuous process of self-constraint (Butler, 2016; Reiners, 2012). A possible problem that can arise when a researcher brackets comes during data analysis and interpretation because the researcher has to try to *make sense* of the interpretation of the findings of the rich data found in the spoken data of participants. The researcher must also structure the spoken data in a way that is understandable to themselves and the readers of the study. Creswell (2013) offered another definition for epoche and bracketing “such as suspending our understandings in a reflective move that cultivates curiosity” (p. 83). Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated “bracketing was formally creating visual ways of [bracketing] (p. 219) personal reactions to the data in real time” (p. 219) and suggested that bracketing was nearly impossible to do because even when a researcher thinks he or she is being objective, almost every aspect of the qualitative research process is subjective in nature. Ravitch and Carl (2016) offered support of my decision to utilize hermeneutic phenomenology or interpretive phenomenology which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Martin Heidegger, who was born German and started his career in a field that was not philosophy related, believed that a researcher could not completely bracket themselves from the data as suggested by Husserl (Crowther & Smythe, 2016; Lavery, 2003; Sloane & Bowe, 2014) or an ontological point-of-view. Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology focused on the "mode of being human" (Lavery, 2003 p. 24). Heidegger initially started his research through the Husserlian paradigm. Hermeneutic phenomenology allows the researcher to be an active participant in the process of meaning-making (Sloane & Bowe, 2014) and is concerned with the exploration of human experiences (Lavery, 2003). Unlike, Husserl, he believed the pre-understanding of something was the basis for being in the world, and claimed that interpretation and being human were one in the same and could not be fully separate, much like how a human being cannot shed their skin like snakes do (Heidegger, 1962).

Heidegger (1962) purported understanding was connected to an individual's historicity, and this important aspect of interpretation could not be eliminated and first introduced the hermeneutic circle. The hermeneutic circle involves moving from the experience to the whole of experience, and back and forth again to the understand spoken data. The hermeneutic circle, according to Wardrop and Popadiuk (2013) involves "two end points of a line that are joined, with knowledge informing perspective and perspective informing knowledge...the information acquired through conducting an inquiry is thereby accommodated into the researcher's perspective, and this creates a back-and-forth process" (p. 8). In hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher and the

participant are linked to create the overall findings, and in essence, the participant could be the co-researcher (Laverty, 2003; Rolfe, Segal, & Cicmil, 2017). Hermeneutic research is interpretive and rooted in the historical paradigm of experiences and the development of second and third-order effects of social levels with an emphasis on the presuppositions that have motivated the researcher (Laverty, 2003). Since hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology explore lived experiences of participants, they are nonlinear (Laverty, 2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology further supports an investigator or researcher conducting reflexivity or self-reflection, and then infusing this self-reflection in the interpretive process and placing emphasis on creating a reflective journal (Laverty, 2003; Pagorn, 2015).

Packer and Addison (1989) and Wardrop and Popadiuk (2013) suggested three distinct phases of hermeneutic inquiry. The first phase was identified as “entering the circle” (Wardrop & Popadiuk, 2013, p. 8) which involves the researcher finding a perspective to start their interpretation (Packer & Addison, 1989). The second phase (Wardrop & Popadiuk, 2013) involves the researcher actually conducting the inquiry which incorporates a back-and-forth between the knowledge learned during participant interviews and, “assimilation and accommodation of knowledge and understanding” (p. 8). The final and third phase (Wardrop & Popadiuk, 2013) involves the evaluation of the results through the paradigm of increasing understanding of the phenomenon under investigation by the researcher or the research team.

Role of the Researcher

My role in this research study was to be the primary instrument of data collection (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) and to guide the study to meet the purpose of the study and answer the research questions (Creswell, 2013). The experiences of each individual participant was paramount in the research process, because unlike some phenomenological studies, hermeneutic phenomenology places focus on involving the participant in the research process throughout the hermeneutic circle process (Ricoeur, 1973; Singsuria, 2017). I gathered spoken data from both active sworn sheriff's deputies and police officers from two police agencies located in southcentral Virginia to explore the Ferguson Effect in small law enforcement agencies. Creswell (2013) addressed the need for the purpose statement, problem statement, and research questions to be properly aligned, as well as the need to ask the appropriate questions needed to answer the research questions from the participants. A challenge of conducting a phenomenological study for a researcher could be actually knowing what the common experiences are of the participants (Creswell, 2013).

I was born and raised in a small town in rural Virginia and came from a middle-class upbringing. My father was a hard worker, and I can remember him going to work at 7:00 A.M., returning at 7:00 P.M., just to go back to work the same time the next day for six days straight. I cannot remember having any negative contact with law enforcement, and the law enforcement agency that policed the area where I was raised can be considered a small law enforcement agency. My role as the researcher was that of asking participants to explain, to the best of their knowledge, their world and what they have

experienced pertaining to the Ferguson Effect. My role was to also ask participants how fairness in their police agencies have a perceived impact, if any, on how they have experienced the Ferguson Effect. I attempted to form a research relationship of trust and respect with all participants, as well as practice active listening. I currently reside in the state of Virginia where I am currently also attending George Mason University in pursuit of a Master's in Forensic Science, and am also responsible for the conduct and supervision of federal felony economic and drug crimes that occur on military installations, or which the United States Army has an interest.

Growing up as an African-American, I realized that I may be treated differently as I progressed through life just because of the color of my skin. I exercised subjectivity and my curiosity of the Ferguson Effect phenomenon when deciding on what problem I wanted to address in this culminating study. I would turn on the news and hear the Ferguson Effect being mentioned on the television, and would go to work and hear fellow special agents, as well as local and state law enforcement officers, talk about the phenomenon. I enlisted in the United States Army when I was a junior in high school as a military police officer, and eventually became a sworn federal law enforcement officer for the United States Army Criminal Investigation Command. In my own experience as a law enforcement officer, I have experienced times where citizens have made comments such as "you police think you run the world" and have personally seen negative media portrayals of police officer use of force incidents. After viewing the negative media portrayals, I know that I approach policing differently and have chosen to not be as proactive as I used to be when interacting with the community because of fear of being

the star of the next video on social media; however, I took great care while conducting semistructured interviews not to incorporate my own personal and professional experiences into the participant's unique epistemologies.

Bias

As stated earlier, I was raised in a small (13,000) town in rural Virginia which could present itself as a possible bias in my study which explored the attitudes, opinions, and experiences of police officers and sheriff deputies who were more than likely raised in rural areas as well. Heidegger (1962) addressed the importance of the researcher knowing what their subjective reality is, so it was crucial for me to understand any potential bias to approach the data in a naïve manner. I began and ended this study with reflective journaling to document decisions made in my study and to assess my own bias.

Ethical Issues

Most importantly, the research was conducted with the approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University. A real ethical scenario for my study was if a law enforcement officer, disclosed during their semistructured interview, he or she has violated their local standard operating procedure (SOP) by deciding to be less proactive in the community and not perform their duties to the best of their abilities. As a law enforcement officer, I know most law enforcement officers are very prideful, and the interview could cause both embarrassment and emotional distress. Confidentiality was crucial in this study so that law enforcement participants were comfortable in providing data that articulated and defined their real lived experiences instead of what me, the researcher, wanted to possibly hear. Informed consent was obtained from each

participant via electronic or ink signature prior to the start of an interview. I did not have any personal relationships with any police officers or sheriff deputies at any of the two participant sites and had no conflicts of interest.

Methodology

For this study, I utilized Ricoeur's (1973) hermeneutic approach. Ricoeur (1973) as stated in Singsuria (2017) called for the use of three different steps in hermeneutic phenomenology that starts with what they called the naïve interpretation or surface interpretation, followed by the structural analysis, and then a comprehensive or overall understanding of the lived experiences and phenomenon being explored. I utilized the following steps to analyze the rich data collected.

Naïve reading. During the naïve reading or naïve interpretation, the researcher attempts to guess the spoken data's meaning via the hermeneutic circle to find the whole of the data by interpreting parts of the data (Ricoeur, 1973). I read the interview transcripts multiple times to gauge the initial meaning of the data (Kennedy, 2014; Singsuria, 2017; Tratter, 2015).

Structural analysis. Following the naïve reading, I performed the inductive process of thematic structural analysis to identify and formulate themes that confirmed my initial "guessing" identified during the naïve reading (Ricoeur, 1973; Singsuria, 2017). I utilized the coding stripe and highlight options of NVivo 11 Pro, as well as the highlight feature to identify texts and phrases that stood out to me. Similar text and phrases of words were grouped together in subthemes and general themes (Impara, 2016; O'Sullivan, Kemp, & Bright, 2015; Ricoeur, 1973; Singsuria, 2017) in my

presuppositions to once again travel through the hermeneutic circle and the participants' experiences.

Comprehensive understanding. Finally, during comprehensive understanding or *appropriation* (Carrier & Walby, 2015; Draper, Olsen, McGraw, & Sturtevant, 2015), my goal was to be self-enlarged by the appropriation of the "proposed world" (Singsuria, 2017, p. 350). Once again, weaving in and out of the hermeneutic circle, I combined and took into consideration my presuppositions, the naïve reading, and the peer-reviewed literature during data interpretation (Singsuria, 2017). My presuppositions consisted of my own personal lived experiences of being an African-American federal law enforcement officer and my own personal and professional dealings with balancing enforcing the law while under scrutiny by citizens.

Population/participants. The population/participants for my study were sworn police officers and sheriff deputies in small (less than 250) law enforcement agencies. The sheriff's office employed 121 active law enforcement officers and the police department employed 51 law enforcement officers. Each participant was employed by their agency for at least one year prior to August 9, 2014. There were no restrictions on race, age, rank, position, or years of service in this study, but demographic data was collected and documented. Making the prerequisite of having performed duties of at least one-year prior to the events in Ferguson ensured law enforcement officers could recognize any variations in their behaviors in the performance of their duties.

Sampling strategy. The sampling strategy I employed was purposive random sampling. Creswell (2013) argued that a narrower range of sampling strategy was needed

in phenomenological studies. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) stated random sampling was the “golden standard of qualitative research” (p. 32). The sampling strategy of purposive random sampling is appropriate for this study because it combines the golden standard evident in Miles et al. (2014) while simultaneously allowing for the focusing of strategic and unique contexts.

Sites. I initially proposed two sites that were appropriate to meet the purpose of my study and that were able to answer all research questions: (a) a county sheriff’s office and (b) a city police department. A sheriff’s office and/or a police department were ideal sites for this study. When first deciding on the appropriateness of using State police and highway patrol organizations for this study, I initially thought about including them. As I read the literature more on the Ferguson Effect, I soon realized State police and highway patrol law enforcement agencies were not appropriate sites for this study. Sheriff’s offices and city police departments were more suitable sites for this study because—due to the nature of the calls for service these organizations receive—law enforcement officers are more likely to interact with citizens and respond to calls for service that involve community partnership and shared responsibility.

Rationale of participant size. Out of a projected participant pool between 51-172 participants, I selected a participant size of five to seven participants. In regards to the statistical justification of five to seven participants, the current and relevant literature (Buffone, Schulenberg, & Sycz, 2017; Jeong & Othman, 2016; Murray, Horton, Johnson, Notestine, & Garr, 2015; Sum & Shi, 2016) has shown that as low as three to five participants were appropriate to explore new phenomena in a phenomenological study.

Jeong and Otham (2016) and Sum and Shi (2016) further indicate data saturation can be reached with a small participant size of three to five.

One thing that is sacrificed in smaller sample sizes is that of breadth (Patton, 2015); however, the small sample size of five to seven participants has been shown to yield the rich data necessary to answer a myriad of research questions in qualitative studies (Jeong & Othman, 2016; Sum & Shi, 2016). Fusch and Ness (2015) posited that a solid number should not be sought after in qualitative research, rather, data saturation should be sought when all possible. Data saturation simply means that after a researcher has collected and analyzed data up to a certain point in the study, when he or she starts to find the same themes emerging from the participants, saturation has been reached. Data saturation is also reached when there is enough data obtained so that another researcher can replicate the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Instrumentation. For this study, I conducted in-depth recorded telephonic semistructured interviews of participants with the assistance of an interview guide that was self-authored. Rubin and Rubin (2012) stated interview guides were crucial in ensuring continuity of the open-ended questions being asked by the researcher and the alignment with the research questions. In the criminal justice literature over the past five years, telephonic interviews have been shown to be as effective as face-to-face interviews (McGrath, & van der Spuy, 2014; Schonteich, 2014; Trimek, 2016). Each telephonic interview was recorded utilizing a digital audio recording device for subsequent transcription and thematic analysis. Semistructured interviews of law enforcement personnel was sufficient to gather the data necessary to answer the research questions of

this study. Wolfe and Nix (2016) stated the best way to explore the Ferguson Effect was to ask the individual law enforcement officer. The lived experiences of law enforcement officers, as well as the perceived fairness within participant's organizations, cannot be simply answered with a "yes" or "no" response from the participant or via a Likert-scale commonly used in quantitative research. Miles et al. (2014) stated content validity was greatly associated with the skillset of the researcher because the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection in qualitative research. To address content validity of the interview questions, I asked my committee members to review my interview guide.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Data was collected from participants utilizing semistructured interviews (Saldana, 2016). Semistructured interviews allowed me the flexibility of being focused on gathering rich data able to answer my research questions, and have been shown to be the most appropriate and prevalent type of qualitative interview used by scholars in hermeneutic phenomenology (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Saldana, 2016). I, as the primary instrument of data collection, collected the spoken data from participants and scheduled their interviews approximately one week apart. A one-week gap allowed me time to write analytic memos and journal the interview conducted that particular week. Each interview took approximately 45-60 minutes and were digitally audio recorded with an Olympus recording device.

Recruitment

I telephonically discussed gaining access to participants with a Sheriff of a small sheriff's department located in southcentral Virginia and a Chief of Police in small police

department, also located in southcentral Virginia. Both the Chief of Police and the Sheriff expressed interest in allowing me access and permission to solicit participants for this study; however, officially signed letters of cooperation upon Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Walden University were obtained. Both law enforcement agencies follow the policing strategy of COP.

Flyer

Once Walden's IRB approved my application and flyer, I obtained an e-mail roster of every sworn law enforcement officer of the sheriff's office and police department to conduct purposive random sampling. Once participants were identified, I personally sent them a copy of a recruitment flyer and sought their participation in my study. Each email was transmitted individually so as to personalize the invitation and to preserve anonymity and confidentiality. The Chief of Police and Sheriff further personally posted the recruitment flyer in their respective *roll call* and break rooms.

Reciprocity and Gifts

Ravitch and Carl (2016) spent an entire section on reciprocity and explained what the "social exchange" (p. 356) is for a participant's time in qualitative research. Ravitch et al. (2016) is not against offering participant's compensation, but did address the need for the researcher to explain his or her decision. Pandya and Desai (2013) indicated when there is little to no skill needed to participate in a study, gifts were appropriate as tokens of appreciation. I utilized debriefing after interviews were conducted and provided debriefing handouts to all participants in the study. Each participant was provided a \$25.00 Amazon e-gift card for participation. To ensure transparency and reduce the

possibility of participants telling me what they think I want to hear, rather than their lived experiences, all participants, including those who volunteered but end up not participating, still received a \$25.00 Amazon e-gift card.

Participation

The flyer e-mailed to solicited participants in the study documented that participation was strictly voluntary, and that written informed consent would be obtained prior to the conduct of the interview. Digital signatures were also utilized as long as the participant agreed to this being acceptable. Ink signatures were not be required because all participants agreed to using digital signatures, and the informed consent form was sent from each participant's individual e-mail address to myself.

Data Analysis

For this study, I conducted in-depth recorded telephonic qualitative interviews of participants. These interviews were recorded utilizing a digital recorder and a cellular phone. I initially planned to conduct interviews via the web conferencing software of Skype®; however, wanted to make participation as easy for the participants as possible. Answering a cellular phone is a lot easier than having a laptop, the Internet, and Skype® software, and my research questions were still able to be answered with telephonic interviews. The interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription service and not by myself. This kept me from being bias by the preliminary data to stay “naïve,” and kept me impartial and unbiased. Utilizing a transcription service also helped me from becoming “burned out” during the data collection phase of this study. Telephonic interviews are the most logical way to conduct the semistructured interviews when the

researcher is far away from the participant site. I currently reside in northern Virginia and the location of my participants was southcentral Virginia.

Transcription

After data from participants was collected, word-for-word transcriptions was completed by a company of my choosing and quality was not sacrificed for the price of this type of transcription. I utilized Rev.com® as my transcription service. Qualitative research is inherently a very time consuming process and research method. Working a full-time job, pursuing a second Master's degree, and working on this project required me to employ the assistance of a transcription service. I needed this valuable time to analyze the rich data I gathered from the participants.

Naïve Reading After Transcription

After transcripts were returned by the transcription service, I started data interpretation by reading each transcript multiple times to understand the initial meaning of the rich data (Pratt-Eriksson, Bergbom, & Lyckhage, 2014).

Coding/Structural Analysis

Thematic analysis was utilized to document the relevant codes, themes, and subthemes in the study and to confirm my initial understanding of the participant's spoken data. Saldana (2016) stated a code is a word or short phrase used by a researcher to assign attributes for language or things that are visual. To increase anonymity, I assigned a pseudonym to replace the real names of all participants.

First Cycle Coding

I utilized In Vivo coding during first cycle coding after my naïve reading had been conducted. In Vivo coding is also known as verbatim coding because the participant's own words dictate the subsequent code assigned by the researcher. In Vivo coding is applicable in most all qualitative studies, and has been shown to be useful for the beginning qualitative researcher such as myself (Saldana, 2016). Stringer (2014) stated a researcher was more likely to capture a participant's experience when In Vivo coding is used.

Second Cycle Coding and Comprehensive Understanding

Second cycle coding is often used to reorganize and reanalyze data coded in first cycle coding (Saldana, 2016). I utilized the second cycle coding strategy of pattern coding. Pattern coding is suitable to group and summarize first cycle codes into smaller categories and is useful in identifying emergent themes in the data (Saldana, 2016). Miles et al. (2014) further stated pattern coding is useful in findings explanations in data. The hermeneutic circle was utilized during this phase, and reference to peer-reviewed journal articles was conducted during data interpretation and comprehensive understanding.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Ravitch and Carl (2016) explained that credibility in qualitative research means that the researcher can explain and handle details or data in a study that are not easily explained. Miles et al. (2014) stated credibility in qualitative research should be able to answer the question of “do the findings of the study paint an authentic portrait of what we

are looking at” (p. 312). To enhance credibility of the study, I utilized member checking in the form of providing each participant with a verbatim copy of the transcripts and my analysis of our interview together, to ensure my conclusions were an accurate representation of the participant’s spoken data. Miles et al. (2014) and Ravitch and Carl (2016) both support member checking as a method to increase credibility.

Transferability

Exploring the Ferguson Effect in smaller law enforcement agencies could be applicable to larger police departments (Nix & Wolfe, 2016); therefore, transferable. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated qualitative studies do not concern themselves with being applicable to other settings and be generalized, rather transferability is achieved when the study is context-rich and applicable to broader contexts while maintaining “context-specific richness” (p. 189). To achieve transferability in my study, I utilized thick descriptions of the data so they were context-rich. Miles et al. (2014) and Ravitch and Carl (2016) both support thick description as a method to increase transferability.

Dependability

Miles et al. (2014) argued dependability is achieved in qualitative research when the data is consistent and stable over a time period. Ravitch and Carl (2016) as well as Babbie (2014) referred to dependability as being achieved when the researcher has given a reasonable argument for how they are collecting data in the study, and how the data gathered is consistent with the purpose of the study. To increase dependability of my study, I articulated reasoning of my sequencing methods to confirm that I have created an appropriate data collection tool to accurately answer the research questions as suggested

by Ravitch and Carl (2016). I also relied heavily on my methodology committee member's feedback and guidance while developing my data collection tool (interview guide and interview questions).

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research can be described as the concept of researchers in explaining the biases that exist in a study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Miles et al., 2014). Subjectivity is embraced and explained instead of having the paradigm the researcher can be objective in a study. To increase confirmability of my study, I reflected on my own biases in reflexive journals and described my own structured reflexivity process in this study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Ethical Procedures

For this study, I obtained letters of cooperation from a Sheriff and Chief of Police prior to conducting data collection. I have completed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research web-based training on protecting human research participants.

Data Storage

Data collected in this study was stored in an external hard drive that is password protected. Data was also stored in a separate universal serial bus (USB) in the event the external hard drive was damaged or corrupted in any way. I did not utilize a solid state drive (SSD) to store collected data because these types of hard drives automatically delete data to maximize efficiency. All audio recordings of participants, notes, and consent forms were placed in a folder named "Dissertation Data."

Data Maintenance

Walden University's guidelines mandate that I keep all data gathered in the study confidential. I secured a confidentiality agreement with Rev.com® and will save the data gathered for a minimum of five years. I will subsequently destroy the data after five years to include reflexive memos and journals.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided the history and description of phenomenology, specifically, hermeneutic phenomenology, which places an emphasis on the participant's in the study as being co-researchers. I discussed my own biases and role as the researcher in the study, discussed the research design and rationale, methodology, and issues of trustworthiness. I concluded with a summary of the main topics of this chapter. In Chapter 4, I discuss the results from data collection.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of police officers regarding the Ferguson Effect in small police agencies, as well as police officer's perceptions of their own organizational justice. The problem this research has explored is how negatively publicized events (Ferguson Effect) and the perceived perceptions of police officers about their own organizational justice affects the manner, if any, in which they practice policing post-Ferguson. The interview questions utilized were formulated and aligned with the purpose of this study and the research questions. All interview questions asked of participants were open-ended.

In Chapter 3, I reviewed the methodology, the alignment and appropriateness of the research design, the procedures and protocols utilized to ensure ethical research, and the qualitative research design for this study. In Chapter 3, I further described the recruitment methods, sampling strategy, and the number of participants. In Chapter 4, I will provide a description of the research setting, procedures utilized in the pilot study, provide a description of the data collection, provide an overview of the participants in this study as well as demographic data, describe the data analysis phase of this study, explain and describe the major themes and concepts obtained from the lived experiences of the participants, and will address credibility.

Research Questions

The following were the research questions formulated to explore the Ferguson Effect and lived experiences of law enforcement officers in small police agencies:

RQ1: How do police officers in small law enforcement agencies experience negative media coverage?

RQ2: What are police officer's perceptions and experiences on the importance of fairness in police organizations?

Setting

The setting of the study were a sheriff's department and a city police department, both located in southcentral Virginia. The county and city law enforcement agencies were responsible for answering calls for service and patrolling a geographic area within 15 square miles of one another, and were very close in proximity. The city police department was located within the geographic boundary of the county sheriff's office. The Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study (#10-12-17-0527483). I obtained letters of cooperation from both law enforcement agencies' executive leaders (Sheriff and Chief of Police).

The sheriff's department was first law enforcement agency where data collection began; however, a lack of participation from law enforcement officers, and an attempt to reach data saturation prompted the need to also utilize the second law enforcement agency (city police agency). Since these two law enforcement agencies' area of responsibility were located within 15 square miles of one another, no adverse impact to the findings of this study or abnormal variation in law enforcement officer experiences

were anticipated or noted during this study. Participation in the study was completely voluntary, and no conflicts of interest were identified. I anticipated recruitment from law enforcement officers and conducted no such recruitment prior to IRB approval. Each participant received a \$25.00 Amazon e-gift card upon completion of their telephonic interviews.

Sampling Strategy

Eight men and one woman participated in this qualitative study. I used purposeful random sampling to select participants for solicitation to participate in this study. As part of the letter of cooperation between myself and each police executive, I received the agency e-mail addresses for each active-sworn law enforcement officer for each agency. I then assigned a number to each email address ranging from numbers 1-10, and imported this data into Microsoft Excel®. Once imported into Microsoft Excel, I utilized the random sampling feature of Excel® in the Data Analysis ribbon to randomly select numbers 1-10, which corresponded to an individual's organizational e-mail address. Once identified, I sent the randomly selected individuals a letter of invitation, a flyer (Appendix D), and an informed consent form. I repeated this process until participants returned their signed consent form, and I reached data saturation. I utilized digital signatures for the informed consent form, and the participants could reply to my solicitation e-mail with the words, "I consent."

Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study that consisted of the first random law enforcement officer interviewed. A pilot study was conducted to test my self-authored data collection

tool (Appendix A), become familiar with my recording devices, identify any technical issues that may arise from utilizing my audio recorder as well as my cellular phone recording application, become more comfortable utilizing my data collection tool, and to obtain feedback concerning the debriefing form wording (Appendix B), flow, and clarity. The pilot study participant was from the same setting of the main study.

I asked the pilot study participant about the clarity of the language used in the data collection tool. The participant indicated the consent form, interview guide, and debriefing form were clearly written. The participant stated he could understand the intent and language of such forms. The dialogue between myself and the participant were critical components of this hermeneutic phenomenological study (Sloane & Bowe, 2014). I identified changes that needed to be made to the interview guide because there were several interview questions which asked the participant to perform two functions, “describe and explain.” Asking the pilot participant to perform two actions oftentimes caused confusion of the participant when answering the interview questions. The participant would also forget the question asked of him halfway through providing a narrative of his lived experiences. I submitted a request for change in procedure form to the Walden University IRB and was granted approval for this data collection tool change.

Upon completion of the pilot interview, I immediately utilized the notes feature of NVivo 11 Pro to journal and reflect my thoughts of the interview experience and of the participant’s experiences. I conducted the member check process with this participant to establish credibility of the study. The member check interview allowed the participant to read the transcript for himself, and provide his own feedback to me as to if my

interpretation of his experiences were an accurate representation of his lived experiences (Miles et al., 2014; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The pilot study helped test the research design and instrument. The pilot study allowed me to understand unintended and unanticipated technical and methodological issues related to conducting this phenomenological study. The pilot study also allowed me the opportunity to perform reflexivity to enhance the subsequent eight participant's experiences of participating in this study.

Data Collection

I collected data in an interview format using a series of open-ended questions. I formulated the questions to illicit thick and rich description of police officer's experiences of the Ferguson Effect. I began each interview by asking if each participant was in an environment where they felt comfortable sharing personal experiences with me, without anyone else being able to hear our telephonic conversation. Some of the participants were located in their offices at work, some were in their home offices on their day off, and some were still on shift answering the interview questions while in their patrol vehicle—with their supervisors permission. I was located in my home office during all of the interviews. After confidentiality was established, I then thanked them for agreeing to participate in the study, and told the participant a little about myself to establish rapport. I recorded each interview with an Olympus digital voice recorder (Model: VN-702PC) with an attached Olympus telephone pickup device (Model: TP7). I utilized the cellular phone application of ACR Pro as a secondary means of audio recording in the event of a catastrophic technical failure of my primary Olympus

recording device. On one occasion, the Olympus digital recorder did fail due to battery failure; however, the secondary ACR Pro application on my cellular phone captured the interview. All interviews lasted between 32-62 minutes.

Participants had the ability to cease the interview at any time. During the interview, additional clarifying questions ensured I understood the information provided by the participants. The semistructured interview protocol (Appendix A) allowed for open ended questions to collect data to answer the research questions. I asked sub questions during some of the interviews; however, I discussed with each participant during the start of the interview that my intent as the researcher was to do very little talking as possible. I informed each participant that their interview was about his or her experiences and perceptions, not mine. Clarifying that the participant's lived experiences and perceptions were paramount led to very rich spoken data. I listened closely to each participant's tone of voice as I asked the interview questions. I wanted to pay close attention to the tone of voice to specifically gauge the comfort or confusion level with the participant, since I was not able to see nonverbal clues.

At the end of each interview, I set up follow up interviews or member checks with each participant to review their transcripts, and ensure the transcripts were an accurate representation of the participant's lived experiences and perceptions. Interviews took place for a 7-week period. I utilized the transcription service of Rev.com for verbatim transcription, and then verified the accuracy of the transcripts by replaying the interview recording and correcting any errors. I provided each participant with a summary of the transcript, as well as the overall themes and sub themes that emerged from their lived

experiences. Each participant found the summaries to be an accurate representation of their respective interview.

Each recorded interview is stored on an external hard drive that is password protected. Each interview is also stored in a separate universal serial bus (USB) in the event the external hard drive is corrupted in any way. All consent forms, hard copies of transcripts, and demographic information are stored in a locked area and will be maintained for a period of 5 years. This process did not vary from what was proposed, from the pilot study, or from any unusual adverse events presented in the data collection.

Participant Demographic Profiles

The study sample consisted of eight adult men and one adult woman. All eight men self-identified as White, and of non-Hispanic ethnicity. The one woman self-identified as White, and of non-Hispanic ethnicity. I proposed interviews of five to seven participants initially; however, data saturation was not reached. I submitted a request for change in procedure form to the Walden IRB to interview two more participants, which was subsequently granted. To ensure confidentiality, a pseudonym was assigned to each participant after the interview, and a master participant code sheet was utilized (Appendix C) to assign unique identification to each participant. All nine participants were White. The mean age was 37.3 with a Standard Deviation (SD) of 9.1 years. The youngest participant was 26 years of age, and the oldest participant was 54 years old. The mean years of experience for the participants was 12.2 with a SD of 9.5 years. The least amount of years of service was 4 year, and the most senior participant served 33 years. As seen in Table 1, the total years of police service of all participants combined was 110 years.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Gender	Highest Level of Education	Rank	Years of Service	Duty Position	ID Number
James	39	M	BA	PO	4	Patrolman	17.01
Timothy	54	M	MA	Deputy	33	PD	17.02
Henry	27	M	AA	Sergeant	6	Investigator	17.03
Johnathan	38	M	MA	Sergeant	17	PS	17.04
David	34	M	HSD	Deputy	7	PD	17.05
Brandon	26	M	HSD	Investigator	5	Investigator	17.06
Herbert	30	M	BA	Deputy	5	PD	17.07
Samantha	43	F	BA	Corporal	16	PCOR	17.08
Robert	45	M	BA	Captain	17	PCPT	17.09

Note. M=Male, F=Female, AA=Associate's degree, BA=Bachelor's degree, MA=Master's degree, HSD=High School diploma, PO=Patrol Officer, PD=Patrol Deputy, PS=Patrol Sergeant, PCOR=Patrol Corporal, PCPT=Patrol Captain

Following the hermeneutic approach of allowing the individual voices of each participant to be heard, the following is a brief description of each participant.

James

James was a 39-year old White male who stated he had been involved in several non lethal use-of-force incidents, although they were not publicly known or publicized in the media. James is mainly responsible for policing a mainly Hispanic zone or *beat*. He appeared to listen very carefully to the interview questions being asked, and was very calculated and deliberate when answering questions.

Timothy

Timothy was a 54-year old White male who stated he had been involved in several non lethal use-of-force incidents throughout his 33 years of law enforcement experience. Timothy was assigned to an airport, where he recently responded to an active

shooter incident. Timothy described this incident as “life changing,” and had never experienced anything like this incident before. Timothy is currently pending a transfer to be an instructor at the police academy, so he can share the knowledge he has gained with new police recruits. He appeared to listen very carefully to the interview questions being asked, and also took his time formulating his responses to the interview questions.

Henry

Henry was a 27-year old White male and had 6 years of law enforcement experience. Henry was assigned as a general investigator in his law enforcement agency. He conducts investigations that range from simple larcenies that regular patrols do not have the time to investigate, to homicides. Henry stated the typical cases he investigates in his geographic region were mainly breaking and entering (B&Es) and credit card frauds. Henry related that most smaller law enforcement agencies do not have separate investigative divisions due to manpower constraints. Henry recently received his promotion to Sergeant as of two months of his interview. He appeared to listen very carefully to the interview questions being asked, and was very curious as to if I was going to conduct this same study in larger law enforcement agencies—which was a testament of his intellectual curiosity and being a stakeholder in the exploration of the Ferguson Effect.

Johnathan

Johnathan was a 38-year old White male who stated he had been involved in several non lethal use-of-force incidents throughout his 17 years of law enforcement experience. Johnathan was assigned as a field training officer (FTO) for his law

enforcement organization, as well as being responsible for his department's training unit, which includes instructing in the police academy. His primary duties include instructing new recruits at the police academy, which he enjoys because he feels a sense of accomplishment and giving back to his law enforcement organization. Johnathan stated while on patrol performing his FTO duties, his patrol area of responsibility included predominantly Black neighborhoods in a rural area. He appeared to listen very carefully to the interview questions being asked, and oftentimes asked if he articulated his answers to the interview questions effectively.

David

David was a 34-year old White male who stated he had been involved in several non lethal use-of-force incidents throughout his 7 years of law enforcement experience. David was assigned as a patrol deputy for his department, where he recently was assigned to the drug interdiction unit of the patrol division. As part of his drug interdiction unit duties, he performs his duties in a marked patrol vehicle with his regular uniform on; however, is not responsible for answering reactive calls for service and performs proactive drug interdiction activities. If you want an honest answer to a question, ask David. David was not reluctant to answer any question asked of him, and out of the other eight participants, appeared to be the most comfortable during his telephonic interview. David's patrol area of responsibility included a diverse population of Black and White citizens in a rural area. David appeared to listen very carefully to the interview questions being asked, and aspires to be a school resource officer later in his career.

Brandon

Brandon was a 26-year old White male who stated he had been involved in several non lethal use-of-force incidents throughout his 5 years of law enforcement experience. Brandon was assigned as an investigator for his department. As part of his duties, Brandon's primary duties include the investigation of felony and misdemeanor level crimes which he enjoys. Brandon and I shared a common experience of both serving in the military and deploying, which helped establish rapport and made him feel more comfortable answering the interview questions as we proceeded throughout the interview. Brandon's patrol area of responsibility included a diverse population of Black and White citizens in a rural area. Brandon is also considered to be a general investigator much like Henry. Prior to being an investigator, Brandon was assigned to the patrol division.

Herbert

Herbert was a 30-year old White male who stated he had been involved in several non lethal use-of-force incidents throughout his 5 years of law enforcement experience. Herbert was assigned as a FTO for his department, and is mainly responsible for the new "hands on" training of newly hired sheriff deputies who have graduated the police academy. Herbert stated the calls for service in his patrol area of responsibility were not as sporadic in the fall and winter months as opposed to the summer months. Herbert stated he enjoyed training new deputies, but that he could see a change in the "type" of individual having what it takes to stay in law enforcement in this era of law enforcement evolution. Herbert's patrol area of responsibility included a diverse population of Black

and White citizens in a rural area. Herbert appeared to pay close attention to the interview questions, and appeared to answer them to the best of his ability and with honesty—as did all the participants.

Samantha

Samantha was a 43-year old White female who stated she had been involved in several non lethal use-of-force incidents throughout her 16 years of law enforcement experience. Samantha was assigned as a patrol corporal for her law enforcement agency, and is mainly responsible for the supervision of five other law enforcement officers, as well as patrolling her own area of responsibility. Samantha stated she had a unique perspective of law enforcement, which was evident in her interview, that she tends to be more compassionate and methodical in the performance of her duties as a supervisor and while on patrol.

Samantha attributed this different paradigm to being involved in the healthcare field prior to serving in law enforcement. Samantha's patrol area of responsibility includes a predominantly Black citizen population in an impoverished rural area. Samantha portrayed that she was the “mother figure” of her department, and that when any fellow officer needs assistance in dealing with a domestic or mentally ill individual situation, she would be the first person to be called to assist to de-escalate the situation.

Robert

Robert was a 45-year old White male who stated he had been involved in several non lethal use-of-force incidents throughout his 17 years of law enforcement experience. Robert was assigned as the patrol division captain for his law enforcement agency, and is

mainly responsible for the supervision of 26 other law enforcement officers, to include each patrol lieutenant, and patrol sergeant of each patrol shift in his law enforcement agency. Robert's long career and experiences were evident in his interview, and he portrayed his vast law enforcement experiences in his tone of voice and through his experiences. Prior to being the patrol division captain, Robert was a patrol lieutenant. Robert's leadership philosophy includes having a supervisor on every citizen contact so that possibly tense situations can be de-escalated on scene, instead of having to react to negatively publicized incidents. Robert's patrol division is responsible for a proportionately equal Black and White citizenry in a rural area.

Data Analysis & Hermeneutic Process

For data analysis, I utilized Ricoeur's (1973) hermeneutic approach. Ricoeur (1973), as stated in Singsuria (2017), called for the use of three different steps in hermeneutic phenomenology, that starts with what they called the naïve interpretation or surface interpretation, followed by the structural analysis, and then a comprehensive or overall understanding of the lived experiences and phenomenon being explored. I utilized the following steps to analyze the rich data collected. I analyzed the text from the transcribed interviews to find common themes and subthemes from the lived experiences of the participants. The first step I utilized in the data analysis was the naïve reading, which I will explain in the next section.

Naïve Reading

During the naïve reading or naïve interpretation, the researcher attempts to guess the spoken data's meaning via the hermeneutic circle to find the whole of the data by

interpreting parts of the data (Ricoeur, 1973). I read the interview transcripts three times to gauge the initial meaning of the data (Kennedy, 2014; Singuria, 2017; Tratter, 2015). I found myself at awe of the rich and thick description of the experiences of all of the participants of the Ferguson Effect, and their perceptions and experiences on the importance of fairness in police organizations.

Structural Analysis

The second step in the analysis entailed completing the inductive process of thematic structural analysis to identify and formulate themes that confirmed my initial *guessing* identified during the naïve reading (Ricoeur, 1973; Singuria, 2017). I utilized the coding stripe and highlight options of NVivo 11 Pro, as well as the highlight feature to identify texts and phrases that stood out to me. Similar text and phrases of words were grouped together in themes and subthemes (Impara, 2016; O’Sullivan, Kemp, & Bright, 2015; Ricoeur, 1973; Singuria, 2017) in my presuppositions to once again travel through the hermeneutic circle and the participants’ experiences.

Comprehensive Understanding

The final step in data analysis was comprehensive understanding of the data, which entailed summarizing the themes and subthemes as they related to the research questions. During comprehensive understanding or *appropriation* (Carrier & Walby, 2015; Draper, Olsen, McGraw, & Sturtevant, 2015), my goal was to be self enlarged by the appropriation of the “proposed world” (Singuria, 2017, p. 350). Once again, weaving in and out of the hermeneutic circle, I combined and took into consideration my

presuppositions, the naïve reading, and the peer-reviewed literature during data interpretation (Singsuria, 2017).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I utilized member checking in this study to ensure the spoken data, and my analysis of the data, were accurate representations of the participant's experiences. Miles et al. (2014) and Ravitch and Carl (2016) both support member checking as a method to increase credibility. There was no variation from Chapter 3 of this study for this procedure.

Transferability

To achieve transferability, I utilized thick descriptions of the data so they were context rich. Miles et al. (2014) and Ravitch and Carl (2016) both support thick description as a method to increase transferability. There was no variation from Chapter 3 of this study for this procedure.

Dependability

To enhance dependability, I presented a reasonable argument for how I collected the data in my study, and how the data gathered was consistent with the purpose of the study. I further provided an articulation of my reasoning of my sequencing methods to confirm that I created the appropriate data collection tool to answer the research questions, as suggested by Ravitch and Carl (2016). One variation from Chapter 3, that I utilized to seek dependability, was asking an expert—beyond my dissertation committee—to review my data collection tool. The author of Maxwell (2013), Dr.

Maxwell, graciously provided his time to review my self-authored data collection tool and provided valuable feedback.

Confirmability

To increase confirmability of my study, I reflected on my own biases in reflexive journals, and described my own structured reflexivity process in this study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Results

The following section utilized excerpts from the verbatim transcripts of all nine participants, which were used to answer the two research questions of the study. The use of In Vivo coding allowed me to perform continuous reflexivity as I moved throughout the hermeneutic circle. The use of In Vivo coding also allowed me to stay as close to the data as possible. Further, I utilized the auto coding feature of NVivo 11 Pro to organize each participant's response to each interview question by participant in one singular location. The term "auto coding" should not be confused with assuming NVivo 11 coded the text, rather, I had to still code and analyze each of the participant's transcripts.

Themes

During the naïve reading and structural analysis, I was able to discover emerging themes and subthemes from the participant's narratives regarding their lived experiences of viewing negative media portrayals of the police, and of their perceptions of the importance of fairness within police organizations. Three main themes emerged from the data, as well as seven subthemes. Each theme and subtheme corresponded to the particular *node* where a specific In Vivo code and pattern code was categorized. A node

is simply a single point or connection in a network or a simulated bucket to store information (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). These themes aided in answering the two research questions. Figures 2, 3, and 4 are examples of the structural analysis that led to the three themes and seven subthemes.

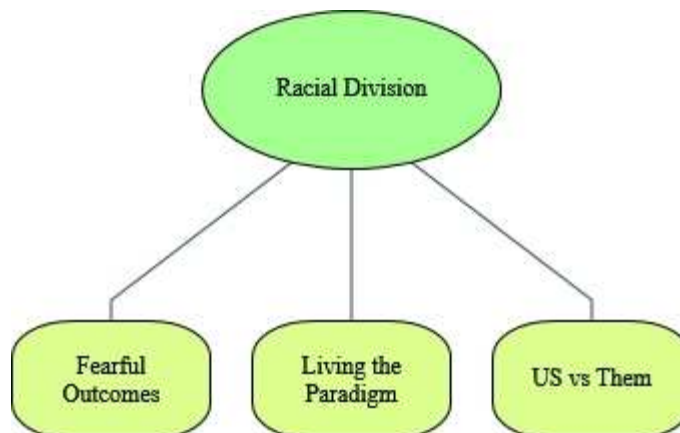


Figure 2. (Theme 1). Structural analysis from the theme of racial division as the parent node and the child nodes or subthemes of fearful outcomes, living the paradigm, and us versus them.

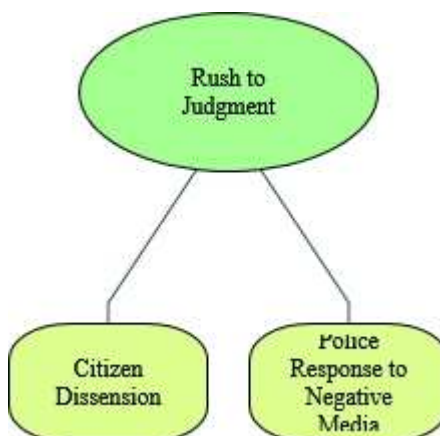


Figure 3. (Theme 2). Structural analysis of the theme of rush to judgment as the parent node and the child nodes or subthemes of citizen dissension and police response to negative media.

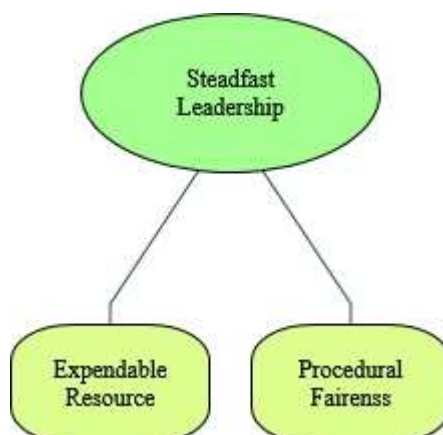


Figure 4. (Theme 3). Structural analysis of the theme of steadfast leadership as the parent node and the child nodes or subthemes of expendable resource and procedural fairness.

As Figure 2 reflects, during the structural analysis, experiences of racial division emerged as the first theme. Subthemes of racial division consisted of fearful outcomes, living the paradigm, and us vs them. Experiences of a rush to judgment emerged as the second theme. Subthemes of rush to judgment consisted of citizen dissension and police response to negative media. Each participant was able to provide detailed rich descriptions of their lived experiences and perceptions. I used themes' one and two hierarchical structure to answer the first research question of the study: how do police officers in small law enforcement agencies experience negative media coverage of police?

As Figure 3 reflects, during structural analysis, experiences of steadfast leadership emerged as the third theme. Subthemes consisted of expendable resource and procedural fairness. I used theme three's hierarchical structure to answer the second and final research question of the study: what are police officer's perceptions and experiences on the importance of fairness in police organizations?

Theme 1: Racial Division

The first theme that emerged from the data was experiences and perceptions of racial division. Participants provided, in detail, their lived experiences with racial division.

Fearful outcomes. Fearful outcomes was the first subtheme that emerged under racial division. I noticed that four of the nine participants began their interviews by indicating they experienced fearful outcomes or consequence as a result of viewing negative media portrayals of police officers. For example, Brandon, David, Johnathan, and Herbert all experienced a form of hesitation or fear to perform their duties. Brandon stated, “My family could be affected because I might lose my job cause somebody said something wrong. It turns a good decision into what can seem like a bad decision. It makes you not want to do anything.” David stated, “If I kill a black man, on duty..... I'd better be prepared to lose my job and face punitive sanctions even if it's justified.” David also stated,

I really hope he doesn't produce a weapon. I really hope, you know, um ... Just because of what I may face on the backside of that. Uh, we are heavily scrutinized in everything we do. Uh, if we violate somebody's constitutional rights, that is addressed immediately.

Johnathan stated, “Um, I think more cops now are just as much afraid about going to prison over something simple that resulted from someone else's behavior that they can't control.”

Herbert reported,

Um, and, it's, it has had a large impact, I feel like we've almost went back to '60s, '70s type of mindset, of in the black community and in the white community. 'Cause, I feel like white, especially police officers, now, you're afraid to say certain things to certain people, um, because if you do, you don't want to affect your family, your livelihood, anything like that.

Living the paradigm. Living the paradigm was the second subtheme that emerged under racial division. The living the paradigm subtheme linked with the fear of negative outcomes of police officer actions as participants provided their lived experiences and perceptions of what they encountered daily on the job. The majority of the experiences of the participants were found during traffic stops initiations, during the arrest of an individual, and during town hall meetings. All nine participants experienced this subtheme in the performance of their duties; however, examples will be provided for Brandon, Herbert, Robert, Samantha, and Henry. Brandon stated, “You know, pulling somebody over for a minor traffic violation, whatever, you know whatever traffic violation...somebody pulls out a phone and then makes some, some comment.” Herbert experienced the following:

This guy has had a, uh, he's had a criminal background, which doesn't play an affect to me. Um, it just helps me know who I'm dealing with for anybody, but, uh, as soon as we investigated what happened. Placed him into handcuffs. The first thing, the first thing that he said, is, you know, I'm a black man, you're a white officer, I know, I know why you're arresting me. I know why you're arresting me.

Robert stated, "I know it was mentioned, again, you know it's something you talk about in the shift change, they see the news...oh my god, well we can't even stop anybody anymore..it's harder emotionally to do the job." Samantha described an incident when she had to arrest a Black citizen in front of a crowd of others wherein she experienced the following:

Well, so we're walking him out and then he decides that he's gonna start showing out and immediately the cell phones come out... I saw them cell phones pop out it was like, Oh man, cause he's not getting in the vehicle, you know, he's not getting in the back of the car...we were trying to push his head down and, and, you know, force his body into the back of the car. And when I saw the cell phones it was an immediate crap!

Negative media portrayals of police officers almost made Henry resign and stop policing for his police department and go to a separate field of law enforcement where he had minimal citizen contact. Henry stated,

I almost left because I didn't feel appreciated. And why these...the-the new people come and apply here, I have no idea. There's so many other things they could do...that's beyond me. But uh, I alm- ... I almost left doing like local law enforcement work, and I was gonna go to, uh, like the-the forest land law enforcement for the state, working the parks and stuff. Just to kinda get away from the-the public view a little bit. But um, it's-it...I mean, yeah, it's-it's just been bad. It's just had a, had a kind of a dark cloud over us ever since this stuffs

happened, and it's-it's up to us as a department to be able to move past some of that stuff.

Us versus them. Us versus them was the third subtheme that emerged under racial division. A common experience and phrase that four of the nine participants (Brandon, Johnathan, Robert, and Timothy) experienced in the performance of their duties, which led to the selection of this subtheme, was that of “hands up, don’t shoot.” Brandon described an experience where he was arresting a Black citizen and stated that citizen stated, “I don't want to get, you know, "I don't want to get beat by the cops. I'm gonna record you...something like that or ‘hands up, don't shoot." Johnathan reported, “And then post-Ferguson it came up ‘hands up, don't shoot’ and that message was spread across, it just took like wildfire.” Robert experienced the following:

And you know, they're afraid they're gonna be the next story on CNN. But, uh...it's calm down quite a bit. Probably the most heart breaking thing I ever dealt with, I got...I was in the patrol car, I came up behind a school bus at a red light. All the kids ran to the back of the bus, put their hands in the air and started chanting "hands up, don't shoot!"

Timothy stated,

With the Ferguson- Ferguson, uh, shooting, everything that came out of the media was totally false. And then there- you know, the narrative of the hands up, don't shoot never happened...but that's- that's the type of, uh, of, you know, lockstep thing a- or agenda that get- starts getting pushed up, and the agenda is, “cops are killing black people.”

Theme 2: Rush to Judgment

The second theme that emerged from the participant's experiences and perceptions was a rush to judgment. Participants provided, in detail, their lived experiences and perceptions of their communities and the media forming quick, nonfactual based opinions of negatively portrayed law enforcement actions.

Citizen dissension. Citizen dissension was the first subtheme that emerged under rush to judgment. Seven of the nine participants experienced a negative perception from the citizens in their communities. The exceptions were Samantha and Robert. For example, Brandon stated, "Because the negative publicity...It's not only an officer who makes this decision on a call, and that's perceived negatively. It's, okay, now cops are bad, and people want to hurt cops. So now you gotta worry about your off-duty."

David experienced the following:

I, I, I rolled up into the, uh, community apartments, all the little boys just stand there with their hands up, 'cause they, you know, they don't know any better.

That's just what mom and daddy told them to do.

Henry reported,

Other areas of the city, uh, you-you lay hands on somebody to arrest them, and the first thing they start shouting is people's names from some, from some of these shootings that they feel were unlawful, or start shouting out their lawyers names.

Henry and Timothy both experienced a perception in decrease in citizen legitimacy of law enforcement officers. Henry stated, "Respect as a whole has went down...for law

enforcement.” Timothy stated, “What- what- what's going on nowadays is there is a total lack of respect for the police.” Johnathan stated, “I don't think we ever had the amount of citizen complaints as we do now.” Johnathan further stated, “I think the thing that I saw was just people, the good people in those communities being fearful of the police instead of coming out or reaching out to us, which they have in the past.”

Robert described an experience where he had a citizen tell him she informed her children not to trust the police. Robert reported, “she's sitting down with the dialogue and explained to us that she's already told her children not to trust the police.” Robert was the only participant who stated his perception of the relationship between his department and the community was better post-Ferguson and negative media scrutiny. Robert stated, “So I think that relationships have actually gotten better since Ferguson, at least in our small community here. We just...we started talking about the issues, opening a dialogue and answering some questions.”

Police response to negative media. Police response to Ferguson was the second subtheme that emerged under rush to judgment. The interview question utilized in this subtheme was, “In what ways, if any, have you altered the way you practice policing since the events in Ferguson and increased media scrutiny?” Six of the nine participants stated negative media scrutiny and the events in Ferguson made them alter the way they practice policing and interact with citizens post-Ferguson. Three of the participants (Brandon, James, and Henry) experienced a change in perception of policing and increased awareness, but no alteration in the way they interacted with citizens post-Ferguson. For example, Brandon reported the following:

Personally, not a lot has changed me. As far as...I don't do anything different if somebody whips out a cell phone camera as if there's no cameras around. And that's how I always try to do things. Since I got this job and in the military I try to do it. I'm one to do it the right way the first time.

James stated, “It, it doesn't, for me personally, it doesn't affect me at all. I, I, The last thing I worry about is the media... I'm more worried about my safety and my fellow officer's safety.”

Henry stated,

You do keep that in the back of your mind when you are dealing with people, and you're thinking, “What if this happens next? I'm gonna be on CN-CNN tomorrow?”... So that was probably the only thing that changed how I looked at stuff. I did my work the same.

The other six participants (David, Herbert, Robert, Johnathan, Samantha, and Timothy) experienced an alteration in the way they interacted with citizens post-Ferguson and/or their police leadership philosophies. David stated, “I, I've studied up on my civil liability... I've increased my tactical training.” Two participants (Herbert and Robert) indicated they altered the way they interacted with citizens post-Ferguson by radically explaining their actions to citizens, in an effort to seek increased transparency—which they did not do previously. Herbert reported,

Communicating why I'm there, what I'm doing and why I'm doing it a lot better than what I probably did before. Um, you know, I've dealt with some young kids,

19 to 20, 21 years old, those seem to be the ones that like to cause an uproar a little bit more, um, over police for some reason.

Robert stated, "Let's back up around this wall before we start communicating with him."

Johnathan experienced and perceived the need to not perform proactive policing as a result of increased media scrutiny. Johnathan stated,

And I think it's, it's- it's not taking chances when you don't have to. So I'm not going to go out and make 12 or 15 traffic stops. I'm not gonna do suspicious people and I'm not gonna do a bunch of jump outs when I don't have any other articulable facts or I might just come out and talk to them normally. I'm probably not going to do that anymore just based on the risk you know because of risk versus reward. "Am I gonna get in trouble for this, if I jump out and talk to someone?"

Two participants, (Samantha and Robert) indicated their leadership styles had changed since the events in Ferguson by incorporating more analytical thinking when interacting with citizens. For example, Robert stated, "Now, it's a lot more dialogue...you have talk people down, we have to deescalate, separate ourselves from the emotion and it's a lot more of a thinking man's game than it is a wrestling game anymore." Samantha stated,

I no longer just let, you know, just, just let the guys go and do their jobs. Um, I definitely have to think past that and think, okay, not only do I need to, you know, be concerned about the citizen, be concerned about the officer, I need to be concerned about the perception that could be, you know, misconstrued later on.

One participant, (Timothy) indicated he was more defensive and cautious of his surroundings while interacting with citizens post-Ferguson. Timothy stated,

Well, with the advent of the- the cellphone and stuff like that, you- you definitely have to be on guard to make sure that you maintain your professionalism. And that so- and that sounds very cliché, but it is exactly what it is. You can't let yourself devolve in to, you know, uh, for lack of a better term, a pissing contest with somebody or- or, you know, um, an argument.

Theme 3: Steadfast Leadership

The third theme that emerged from the experiences and perceptions of the participants was steadfast leadership. Participants explained, in detail, their lived experiences of a perceptions of needing a leader who was fair in all aspects of leadership, and established clear and concise policies and procedures.

Expendable resource. Expendable resource was the first subtheme that emerged under steadfast leadership. Five of the nine participants (David, Henry, Herbert, James, and Samantha) experienced a variation of decreased self-legitimacy post-Ferguson. Brandon felt as if his department did an excellent job at creating clearer policies and procedures post-Ferguson. Brandon stated,

At least I can say with my department, and with the city, if something was a gray area they didn't leave their officers hanging out to dry. They try to clear... If some... If some similar issue came up across the country in the media, they were real good about saying, "Well we kind of have a gray area here too. Let's clear that up. Let's make sure that nobody, my officers can't say, Well I didn't know. If

we have to go to civil court nobody can say, Well how was he supposed to know what he was supposed to do?" It helps the department and it helps the officer. I think that's very important.

Unlike Brandon, David, Henry, Herbert, James, and Samantha had different experiences. David, Henry, Herbert, James, and Samantha perceived their administration as being willing to sacrifice the career of an individual officer for the sake of appearing or being transparent to the citizenry. For example, David stated, "So, they're gonna be covered. Um, they've got no problem chopping your head off-...making an example out of you. Whether it be an honest mistake, or egregiously." Henry stated, "Uh, they won't, they won't make a final decision, but if it's, if it's something that has affected the agency or the community, they're not gonna allow us to have a-a position where we can do that again." Herbert perceived the following:

I feel like in, I feel like our department, with our policies, I feel like they're fair. I feel like they have, but I also feel like that you have that sort of instance if you screw up, even if you're not breaking policy or if you're going out and being proactive, and you're in a gray area, you're not breaking policy, I still feel like, you are going to be in that, well this doesn't look good for the department, it might be best if you, you know, leave. And I- I feel like, it, I have become less proactive, uh, in the last year and a half. I try to stay proactive, but I will not do much anymore by myself.

James stated,

And you know of course the big, “the guys at the top,” you know, the police chiefs and stuff like that, you know, they, they're still getting paid. So, you know, they're, they don't care, I mean ultimately, sometimes it seems like they don't really care what happens to the individual officer and they don't care about the, um, the ripple effect of their actions towards the officer.

Samantha perceived the following:

I do think that officers can be replaced...and I think it's easier for them to set an officer free, even though it's setting 'em up for a major civil lawsuit, or even a criminal lawsuit. Um, I think that they, that they would rather throw the officer under the bus on that one than they would to take the public scrutiny.

Procedural fairness. Procedural fairness was the second subtheme that emerged under steadfast leadership. Out of the other two additional organizational justice concepts (distributive justice and interactional justice), procedural justice textual perceptions and lived experiences of the participants dominated the spoken data. All nine participants experienced both good and bad leadership throughout their respective careers. Participants credited fair procedural justice within their law enforcement agencies as reasons why they did not, and would not, become less willing to interact with the community or become less proactive post-Ferguson. For example, Brandon stated, “It's of utmost importance. Not only so the officer gets a fair shake.” David's experiences indicated he did not believe police administration or leadership could be fair in internal investigations because of media scrutiny post-Ferguson. David stated, Yeah. It aint gonna be fair...Who said that's gonna be fair?”

Henry stated,

If you're right off the bat told you've kinda, you've kinda screwed up, and-and you feel like you know what the outcomes gonna be, why-why would you got out and put yourself in a, in a mess again?

Herbert stated, "That, that's- that's the scariest part, but I feel like it's extremely more important now to do an internal investigation than probably what it was." James perceived unfairness in the media and called for the need of procedural fairness to cross occupational borders into fair and accurate media reporting. For example, James stated, "So being fair, but that's what the media needs to do. The media needs to be fair."

Johnathan stated,

I think um, in our department, it's been fairly, fairly decent as far a not-quick judgment. I mean, in other places of the country, you've seen officers, um get fired before they even have started an investigation. That's huge, the issue of fairness.

Robert's, Samantha's, and Timothy's experiences offered additional textual evidence to support the subtheme of procedural fairness, and the dominance of procedural justice in the participant's lived experiences. For example, Robert stated,

Yeah, I think as long as uh, as there's policy in place, as long as it's far, as long as it's equal, as long as you know...you are...if you get complained on, as long as you know that incident is going to be thoroughly investigated instead of an over a reaction, there won't be any problems.

Samantha stated,

I think that they would struggle with it. Um, I think if there was an, if, if you're talking about something major such as a shooting and you had a loss of life I think that they would weigh on the side of the public to try to appease them, um, over the officer at, at this point.

Timothy stated,

Um, I think it's a definite problem. Especially in the- the last few years, where ...
A- and I- I know guys that have made comments and- and stuff like that. And- and- and even me, personally. "Why do we want to get involved in certain things where you're not gonna get supported by your agency?"

Summary

In this Chapter, I included the results of the current qualitative study on how police officers in small law enforcement agencies experience negative media coverage of police, and what police officer's perceptions and experiences were of the importance of fairness in police organizations. I discovered three themes consisting of (a) racial division, (b) rush to judgment, and (c) steadfast leadership and seven subthemes using hermeneutic phenomenological analysis. I answered the two research questions. For Research Question 1, How do police officers in small law enforcement agencies experience negative media coverage of police, I found that participants in small law enforcement agencies felt as if the events in Ferguson—and subsequent negative media scrutiny of police officers in the media—was a crossroads in modern day law enforcement. I also discovered that law enforcement officers felt as if they were in a constant battle to gain the public's trust since the events in Ferguson, specifically in

predominantly Black communities. I also discovered the events in Ferguson not only effected law enforcement in Missouri and the city of Ferguson, but law enforcement officers as far as southcentral Virginia have been effected as well.

For Research Question 2: What are police officer's perceptions and experiences on the importance of fairness in police organizations?; I found that police officers in small law enforcement agencies reported they needed clear policies and procedures from their administration or leadership to perform their duties without fear of negative consequences. I discovered that one participant felt as if there was no such leader in the profession of law enforcement that could enact fair policies and procedures that not only protect the police department, but the individual police officer as well.

In Chapter 5, I discuss an interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, provide recommendations, as well as identify the implications for social change of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of police officers regarding the Ferguson Effect in small police agencies, as well as police officer's perceptions of their own organizational justice. The problem this research has explored is how negatively publicized events (Ferguson Effect) and the perceived perceptions of police officers about their own organizational justice affects the manner, if any, in which they practice policing post-Ferguson. I used the organizational justice theory as the theoretical lens for this study, and a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to data analysis, which resulted in a comprehensive understanding of how law enforcement officers in small law enforcement agencies experienced negative publicized events. This study is significant because of the contribution it makes to the existing literature on the Ferguson Effect utilizing the organizational justice theoretical lens. Specifically, my study fills the gap in the current literature by identifying the meaning police officers, in smaller agencies, associated with negatively publicized events of the policing profession, and subsequent willingness to interact with citizens in a time of intense media scrutiny of law enforcement officer actions.

In Chapter 4, I reviewed the research setting, sampling strategy, discussed the pilot study, data collection, described the participants and provided demographic data, discussed trustworthiness, identified and explained the main themes and subthemes identified in the experience and perceptions of the participants, and ended with a

summary. In Chapter 5, I will provide an interpretation of the findings in the context of the theoretical framework and peer-reviewed literature, discuss limitations in the study, provide recommendations for further research, describe the implications of positive social change from the study, and will end with a conclusion.

Research Questions

The following were the research questions formulated to explore the Ferguson Effect and lived experiences of law enforcement officers in small police agencies:

RQ1: How do police officers in small law enforcement agencies perceive negative media coverage?

RQ2: What are police officer's perceptions and experiences on the importance of fairness in police organizations?

Interpretation of the Findings

Participants in the study discussed their lived experiences with policing in a time of intense media scrutiny, and their perceptions of the importance of fairness in police organizations. Three major themes were identified: (a) racial division, (b) rush to judgment, and (c) steadfast leadership. The theme of *racial division* supports the existing body of knowledge of the Ferguson Effect, but also extends the existing body of knowledge of the Ferguson Effect to smaller law enforcement agencies in rural environments. Previous research on the Ferguson Effect and willingness to partner with the community has only been conducted in mainly large police departments in urban environments (Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Oliver, 2015; Pyrooz et al., 2016). Oliver (2015) indicated officers in his study also felt racial tension during the performance of their

duties. Wolfe and Nix (2016) utilized a cross-sectional quantitative study of 567 deputies at an agency in the southeastern United States to explore the Ferguson Effect. The theme of *rush to judgment* in this study supports the existing body of knowledge of the Ferguson Effect and willingness to partner with the community, and extends it to smaller agencies in a rural environment. Nix and Wolfe (2017) indicated negatively reported media of police officers impacted officers' confidence in their authority. Nix and Wolfe (2017) utilized a survey of 567 officers, which was again, a larger police department.

The theme of *steadfast leadership* in this study supports and extends the main body of knowledge of the Ferguson Effect correlative to the organizational justice lens. Nix, Wolfe, Rojek, & Kaminiski's (2015) findings suggested out of all of the subcomponents of organizational justice (distributive justice, interactional justice, and procedural justice), procedural justice was found to be critically important in establishing trust and legitimacy from the public. Nix and Wolfe's (2016) findings suggested that police officers who viewed their leadership as organizationally fair, were less likely to de-police. Officers further felt unmotivated and fearful. In the next section, I will discuss the findings of the study correlative to the literature presented in Chapter 2, as well as the theoretical lens.

Interpretation of Racial Division

As I moved through the hermeneutic circle during the comprehensive understanding phase of data analysis, the final phase was that of confirming my naïve reading of the selected themes and subthemes with the peer-reviewed literature to provide an interpretation of the research findings. Nix, Wolfe, Rojek, and Kaminski (2015)

posited citizen perceptions of police trustworthiness were shaped by neighborhood conditions, which could cause racial division (Cobbina, Owusu-Bempah, & Bender, 2016) between law enforcement and the community. The findings from my study confirm there is currently a perception of racial division between the police and the communities the participants were responsible for policing and residing in. Participants shared their lived experiences of citizens criticizing law enforcement officer's intent for initiating a traffic stop, as well as the reasons for arrest. For example, David stated, "He feels like he's being violated and picked on because he's black." Herbert stated, "The guy said, 'you know, I'm a black man, you're a white officer.'" Robert stated, "Half the calls you go on would become escalated." The organizational justice theoretical framework supports that police officers made choices during the performance of their duties to be perceived as fair by citizens.

Participants shared their lived experiences and perceptions of being very concerned and fearful of possible ramifications of being the center of negative media, and for having to use any type of force to arrest an individual, specifically a Black citizen. The findings from my study corroborate the findings of Nix and Wolfe (2016) and Nix and Wolfe (2017) who argued police have been adversely impacted by negative media portrayals, by having a reduction in motivation and an increased perception of danger. For example, Brandon stated, "It makes you not want to do anything." David stated, "Nothing scares me more than an African-American with a gun." Henry stated, "What if this happens next? I'm gonna be on CN-CNN tomorrow?" Johnathan stated, "There has

been an increase in ambushes and everything else.” Samantha stated, “We've had a loss of morale.”

The aforementioned lived experiences and perceptions of participants also support a consensus in the literature that de-policing is a real and growing phenomenon, that most police agencies are not willing to admit as presented by Oliver (2015). The findings from my study support the belief that the criminal justice scholarly community has to now shift the focus from examining higher crime rates to explain de-policing and a decrease in police proactivity, to exploring the individual police officer as presented by Pyrooz, Decker, Wolfe, and Shjarback (2016).

Interpretation of Rush to Judgment

The findings from my study support the belief that police officers across the country are currently in a self-legitimacy crisis as presented in Nix and Wolfe (2017). Participants perceived a perception in a lack of confidence they had in their authority (self-legitimacy) because of a perceived lack of public support. For example, Brandon stated, “Because nobody wants to patrol.” David stated, “I will spend the rest of my career attempting to fix what will never be restored.” Henry stated, “Respect as a whole has went down for law enforcement.” Timothy stated, “Pushing this agenda, you know, that, you know, the cops are all bad.” Nix and Wolfe (2016) supports Timothy’s and Johnathan’s descriptions of their lived experiences of reduced willingness of officers to engage in community partnerships. For example, Timothy stated, “They go to work, they handle their calls, they don't- they're not proactive.” Johnathan stated, “It's definitely been a downturn in officer's proactive, you know, proactive policing.”

Researchers have conducted studies on the impact community policing has had in increasing legitimacy perceptions of the police by citizens (Gill, Weisburd, Telep, Vitter, & Bennett, 2014; Jenkins, 2016). Participants in my study indicated they, as well as their organizations, increased their efforts to become more transparent and explanatory when interacting with their communities and citizens post-Ferguson. Participants also indicated the use of body cameras were mandated by their organizations as well. For example, Herbert stated, “I’m still trying to keep a good rapport, trying to keep that trust factor and explain why I’m doing what I’m doing.” Robert stated, “We learned that if we don’t control the message, the message is going to control us.” Robert also stated, “I don’t know how you can police now without the use of body cameras.”

Interpretation of Steadfast Leadership

The findings from my study corroborate multiple findings in the literature of organizational justice perceptions as evident in Nix, Wolfe, Rojek and Kaminski (2015), and Patten, Caudill, Bor, Thomas, and Anderson (2015). Participant’s experiences and perceptions offered evidence to support that police officers, as employees, look for supervisory decisions and organizational processes to be handled in a procedurally fair manner to allow for employee input (Nix & Wolfe, 2016). For example, Robert stated, “I wouldn’t want supervision or administration to overreact upon seeing the video.” Samantha stated, “Policies are not being written to protect the officer...and it’s becoming more and more that way.” Henry stated, “They were already talking about placing charges within the first week.” Herbert reported, “Even if you’re not breaking policy or if you’re in a gray area, you’re not breaking policy, I still feel like,...I have become less

proactive. I will not do much anymore by myself.” James stated, “To be fair, you have to know the full story.” The participants who perceived their administration as being procedurally and distributively fair, stated they did not perceive an alteration in the way they interacted with citizens in their community post-Ferguson. The organizational justice theoretical framework supports that law enforcement officers made this perception due to a response of perceived fairness within their own organizations.

Limitations of the Study

In any study, there are limitations that exist and those limitations must be addressed. The same was true for this study. Transferability was an identified limitation of this study as evident in participants’ demographics. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated transferability was the ability of a qualitative study to be applicable in broader contexts. To aid in transferability, I utilized thick description of the participant’s lived experiences and perceptions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) further supports my decision to utilize thick description to achieve transferability. I made every attempt to attract participants from all races to achieve racial diversity. Participants in this study were all White. Numerous Black law enforcement officers were solicited to participate, and only one Black male signed an informed consent form. Unfortunately, once the consent form was signed by the Black officer, he did not confirm a time and date for an interview. I sent several e-mails and text messages to his personal cellular phone, which were not responded to. I made every attempt to attract participants from both genders in equal proportion to achieve gender diversity. Only one female officer agreed to participate in the study.

Since each police office had varied years of experience, duties, and education levels, I could not generalize the results of this study to the entire state of Virginia, although this was not consistent with the purpose of the study. The data gathered and results of the study achieved the purpose of the study and answered the two research questions; however, because there were no Black participants and only one female participant in the study, these findings may not generalize to other races and genders. The findings were limited to a county Sheriff's department and a city police department located in southcentral Virginia, and did not reflect the entire population of the surrounding cities.

Recommendations for Future Research

Research on the Ferguson Effect and its impact on police officer proactivity and community engagement has only recently been conducted by criminal justice researchers (Cobbina, Owusu-Bempah, & Bender, 2016; Maguire, Nix, & Campbell, 2016; Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Wolfe & Nix, 2016). The results of this study outline several recommendations for future research, which primarily correspond to the limitations of this study. First, this study took place in rural southcentral Virginia. Expanding it to other areas would aid in gathering other empirical data that corroborate or refute my findings (Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Pyrooz, Decker, Wolfe, & Shjarback, 2016). Second, future research should be conducted—utilizing a qualitative method—to explore how police officers in larger sized law enforcement agencies perceive and experience negatively publicized events (Ferguson Effect) post-Ferguson (Pyrooz et al., 2016). Third, future research should be conducted to explore minority police officer perceptions and lived

experiences of negatively publicized media of police (Cobbina et al., 2016). One of the participants in this study shared an experience where he was involved in responding to a domestic violence call-for-service, and he perceived the offender in this particular incident as perceiving a deputy that was Black (who was assisting on the call) as a “traitor,” because he was helping the participant arrest him. Finally, future research should be conducted to explore female police officers perceptions and lived experiences of negatively publicized media (Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Pyrooz et al., 2016).

Implications for Social Change

As with any doctoral student pursuing the goal of obtaining a terminal degree, one of the first things that needs to be decided upon is the topic of their dissertation. My interest in understanding how police officers are experiencing intense media scrutiny that has not been seen for the last forty years prompted me to search the peer-reviewed literature on the Ferguson Effect. During this search, I found a gap in the literature that was appropriate to research (Wolfe & Nix, 2016), and that also kept my research interests. One of the primary missions of Walden University is to have their students impact positive social change at the global level. I will discuss the implications of positive social change, evident as a result of this study at the individual, organizational, and societal levels. I will also provide recommendations to stakeholders.

Individual

The participants in this study were all active-sworn law enforcement officers and swore an oath to protect and defend the citizens in their communities. Wearing a badge and a uniform, as well having police powers, is not an occupation that everyone can do.

After listening to the interviews and reading the interview transcripts, many of the participants perceived their voices were not being heard by the citizens of their communities, as well as their leadership. Positive outcomes result when police officers feel as if they are a part of the dialogue and decision-making process to gain the trust of the community back since the events in Ferguson (Nix & Wolfe, 2016). Police officers who feel like they are valued results in positive individual change.

Organizational

The stakeholders of the two law enforcement agencies where this study took place should consider refinement and development of leadership training for police supervisors, as well as refinement in organizational policies that support fairness, community engagement, and community interaction (Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Oliver, 2015). The results of this study indicate law enforcement officers who perceived their administration's policies and procedures as fair, stood behind the community and supported organizational principles, despite working under intense citizen and media scrutiny. Nix and Wolfe (2016) corroborates my findings of positive organizational change.

Societal

A negatively portrayed or perceived police encounter can happen at any moment (Nix & Wolfe, 2017). This same encounter can be watched by millions of people in just a few hours. The results from this study could lead to an increase in trust and partnership between citizens and the police. This increase in trust could lead to fewer unsolved serious crimes due to a lack of cooperation or tips provided by the community, and

increased police legitimacy in the eyes of the community (Grimmelikhuijsen & Meiejer, 2015)—which could result in safer communities and a safer society.

Recommendations

I would recommend every police officer be trained on citizens' rights to record police officer interactions (Wasserman, 2017) and this training also be incorporated into police academy areas of instruction. I recommend an increase in Town Hall meetings (Wantchekon, 2017), as it was evident in the participants' lived experiences this aided in increasing transparency and earning the trust of the community. Some aspect of community policing should be adopted by law enforcement agencies in an effort to increase community engagement (Jenkins, 2016). Care must be taken by police administration when mandating all police officers increase community engagement because not all police officers have the same strengths or the same weaknesses. One officer may be very good at community engagement, and another officer may be very good at finding narcotics. It is up to police administrators to take a personal interest in finding the individual strengths and weaknesses of every officer under their command.

I recommend stakeholders constantly reevaluate and refine their policies and procedures (Nix & Wolfe, 2016) to make them clear and understandable without “gray” areas, as numerous participants called them. Finally, I recommend law enforcement agencies establish or continue critical discussions and relationships with their local media reporting agencies (Nix & Wolfe, 2017). Establishing or continuing liaison with news agencies would allow law enforcement agencies to tell their account of what happened to

the public efficiently and effectively, if needed, instead of perceiving the media as reporting any story that gets them ratings and that are not based on fact.

Conclusion

Performing the job of a police officer today is more complex than it has been in the past. Long gone are the days where citizens do not demand answers from police officers and trust everything told to them. Since the beginning of this study, there has not been a decrease in negatively publicized police media, and the law enforcement community has realized they have to adapt to gain back trust in the community, and to stabilize recruitment and retention of officers. This study explored how negatively publicized events (Ferguson Effect) and the perceptions of police officers about their own organizational justice affects the manner, if any, in which they practice policing post-Ferguson. Police officers, as employees, look for supervisory decisions and organizational processes to be handled in a procedurally fair manner to allow for employee input. Previous researchers have failed to conduct qualitative studies of perceptions of negatively publicized events by law enforcement officers in small law enforcement agencies.

Each participant in this study experienced times where they viewed negative media of police officers, and some even stopped watching the media completely because it made them feel as if the entire nation was against law enforcement. Each participant in the study perceived their individual leadership or administration as fair in some instances and not fair in others. Although participants felt as if the law enforcement community was currently perceived by citizens negatively, the conduit for helping them look past this

public perception consisted of fairness in their organizational policies and procedures, and a strong desire to continue to serve their communities and citizens.

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Appendix A: Semistructured Interview Guide

Semistructured Interview-Part 1 Demographic Questionnaire

ID number assigned to Interview: _____ Date: ____/____/____

1. What is your highest level of education? (place a check mark by one)

Elementary/Junior High _____
 GED/High School Diploma _____
 Some college/trade school _____
 Associate's degree _____
 Bachelor's degree _____
 Some graduate school _____
 Master's degree _____
 Terminal degree (Phd, etc) _____

2. My age is: _____ years

3. My race is (You may mark more than one):

_____ White

_____ African American

_____ American Indian/Native Alaskan

_____ Hispanic

_____ Latino

_____ Asian

_____ Filipino

_____ Other: _____

4. My sex I identify as is: _____:M _____: F

5. My total years of law enforcement experience is: _____ years

6. My rank is: _____

7. Describe your current work position:

8. How long have you been working in your current position?

Semistructured Interview Guide-Part 2 Data Gathering

As a reminder, the definition of the “Ferguson Effect” in this study is “a concept phenomenon wherein police are placed in higher levels of scrutiny in the media and officers are subsequently less willing to engage in proactive law enforcement activity.”

1. Describe, in-depth, your experience of viewing negative media portrayals of police.
2. Talk about your interaction with your community as a law enforcement officer since an increase in media and citizen scrutiny.
3. Tell me what the “Ferguson Effect” means to you.
4. Please discuss your personal experience with the “Ferguson Effect.”
5. Please explain your personal experience with the “Ferguson Effect” in the performance of your duties?

Subquestion 5. In what ways, if any, have you altered the way you practice policing since the events in Ferguson and increased media scrutiny?
6. Please discuss your feelings on the importance of fairness in an investigation if you were the center of negative viral media in your department.

Subquestion 6. What do you feel is the relationship between fair departmental policies and police officer willingness to be proactive and partner with the community?
7. What else do you think is important for me to know about what you have experienced about the things we've discussed?

Probing Questions

-Continuation probes

“Tell me more...”

-Elaboration probes

“Tell me more about that...”

-Attention probes

“Ok, I understand”

-Clarification probes

“You said ____, can you explain that to help me better understand...”

-Steering probes

“We got a little off track...you were saying_____.”

-Sequence probes

“Could you describe what happened in the order you best can remember?”

-Evidence probes

“Could you describe a time that happened?”

-Slant probes

“What do you mean by_____?”

Appendix B: Study Debriefing Form

For the study, entitled, “A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis of the Role of Organizational Justice in Community Policing and Police Interactions With Citizens Post-Ferguson”, you were asked to provide some demographic data about yourself and participate in an audio-recorded telephonic interview that lasted between 45-60 minutes. I want to say thank you, and let you know that your time is valuable. You will be asked in this form to set a tentative date and time for a second shorter interview.

You were told that the purpose of the study was to explore police officer’s perceptions and lived experiences regarding the Ferguson Effect and police officer’s lived experiences and perceptions of fairness as it relates to officers being the center of negative media that may look unfavorable upon yourself or your agency. You are in a unique position to provide invaluable, firsthand account of the Ferguson Effect. The actual purpose of the study was the same as the stated purpose.

I did tell you everything about the purpose of the study. If you have any questions, you may contact me, Joshua Adams at joshua.adams3@waldenu.edu or Dr. Howard Henderson at howard.henderson@waldenu.edu.

If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the Walden University Research Participant Advocate who can discuss this with you at 1-800-925-3368 or by e-mail at irb@waldenu.edu.

If you have experiences of distress as a result of your participation in this study, the North Central Human Service center offers a 24-hour crisis hotline which is available to you. Please remember that any cost in seeking mental or medical health services is at your own expense.

You will receive a copy of this debriefing form from the researcher via e-mail after the first interview. You will also receive a copy following the second interview.

Next Step: I will conduct another telephonic interview with you which should last for approximately 30 minutes 3-4 weeks from today’s date in order review the researcher’s interpretation of the interview, which is also known as a “member check.”

1. Next Meeting:

Date: _____ Time: _____

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study, it is greatly appreciated.

Researcher's signature: _____

2. Would you like to know the results and be kept informed about this research study?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, how can I contact you? _____ e-mail _____ mail

Best address or e-mail for notification of results:

Referral Information:

If you are in crisis and need support you may call the North Central Human Service Center at 857-8500 or 1-888-470-6968.

Appendix C: Participant Code Sheet

Interviews

(This sheet is filed separate from all documentation)

Participant's Name (Real Name)	Pseudonym Name	ID Number
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RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS WANTED



Importance of Fairness in Policing Policies and Perceptions of Negative Media Study

- Are you:
 - Active sworn law enforcement officer since August 9, 2013
 - Seen negative media coverage and/or viral videos of police
- If so, you are invited to participate in a study

Conducted by Joshua L. Adams, MA, CFE
Doctoral Student, Walden University

Upon participation in an interview, participants will receive a \$25.00 Amazon gift card

For more information contact:
Joshua Adams
joshua.adams3@waldenu.edu

Walden University's approval number for this study is 10-12-17-0527483 and it expires on 10-11-2018.