A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE MOTIVATIONS OF

MINORITY POLICE RECRUITS PARTICIPATING IN AN ENTRANCE-LEVEL POLICE

ACADEMY

by

Jennifer A. Beskid

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences

of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy. The

central research question of the study was what were the lived experiences of minority police

recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy? Data was collected using

interviews, a questionnaire, and records analysis. The interviews were transcribed with the initial

results being preliminarily grouped. Once the groups were established, the researcher reviewed

the records for inclusion in the groupings. Participants completed a questionnaire designed to

elicit information about their motivations to become police officers. The process of reduction and

elimination was completed. The results of the research contributed to an increased understanding

about minority recruits' motivations to become police officers and their motivations to graduate

from the academy. The results of the research were consistent with existing research while

expanding on the desire of the recruits to improve police and community relations.

Keywords: minority police recruits, entrance-level police academy, and motivation

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to those recruits who agreed to participate in the research, the academy directors and instructors who modified their schedules and allowed me into their academies during a time that was already challenging due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the academy instructors who brought their knowledge of the profession and personal experiences into the classroom setting to help shape and inspire future police officers (and maybe instructors).

Acknowledgments

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the sacrifices of my family members and friends, especially my children who had to plan their schedules around my class and writing times and Mike who also had to make adjustments while I studied, researched, and wrote. Somehow, we persevered. Mom and dad, thank you for all of your support and encouragement.

My professional friends – your work and dedication to public safety is inspiring. Sheriff Troy Berry, Sheriff Tim Cameron, and Sheriff Mike Evans, Director John Moses, and Dr. Julio Birman thank you for allowing me into the academies and for access to the recruits.

Dr. Justin Necessary and Dr. Sharon Michael-Chadwell, thank you for your willingness to serve as Committee Chair and Committee Member. Your interest in this topic, support, and questions truly helped to frame this study and guide the research.

God, thank you for the inspiring thoughts that popped into my head at the most unusual times but mostly when I needed to hear them most; as I was struggling with the direction of the research and the framing of certain concepts. I know this was an inspiration from outside of myself.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

The abbreviations used in this research study are provided below.

Black Lives Matter (BLM)

Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (EVOC)

Field Training Officer (FTO)

Police Officer Standards and Training (POST)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The profession of police officer has been significantly scrutinized because of highly publicized use of force cases involving White police officers and Black males since 2014 (Adamson, 2016; Delgado & Stefancic, 2016; Nix & Pickett, 2017; Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Owusu-Bempah, 2016; & Wolfe & Nix, 2016). Lum and Nagin (2017) reported, "citizens' confidence in and trust of the police" (p. 340) as the focus of current research about policing. The work of Lum and Nagin (2017) builds upon historical accounts about the problems that have been attributed to a lack of diversity in police agencies. A review of the existing literature has confirmed a lack of trust between citizens and the police that has existed since the early 1900s. The Wickersham Commission (1931) determined there were conflicts between patrolmen and citizens that stemmed from a lack of cultural understanding by the patrolmen and the unwillingness of citizens to cooperate with patrolmen due to the citizen's mistrust. The historical and current research regarding the lack of diversity in police agencies and the challenges to recruitment currently being experienced by police agencies was the motivation for this research. The problem studied was the disparity in the number of minority police recruits participating in entrance-level police academies. This chapter includes background information about how policing has changed, the disparity of police recruits, the motivation of entrance-level police recruits to complete the academy, the role of the researcher, and the purpose of the study. This chapter also discusses the significance of the study, the research questions, and defines terms.

Background

The profession of a police officer is multi-faceted, requiring an individual to fulfill the role of various other professions such as mediators, attorneys, social workers, counselors,

educators, and disciplinarians. Smith and Aamodt (1997) described the increasing complexity of

the role of the police officer to include a growing crime rate and changing demographics. More

recent research by Wilson, Dalton, Scheer, and Grammich (2010) stated, "local police roles have

expanded to include not only benign order-maintenance duties, such as answering noise

complaints and solving neighborhood disputes, to new, occasionally militaristic roles, such as

counterterrorism, information-sharing, and immigration enforcement" (p. xv). A consensus from

the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) concluded police officers were

viewed as an occupying force coming from outside to control communities, thus placing barriers,

and preventing the establishment of community trust. Bayley (2016) identified six ways in which

the profession of policing has become more complex over time. These six ways included the

tasks of policing, public demands, strategies used, available technology, and resources (Bayley,

2016). In addition to the challenges presented by an ever-evolving profession, the recruitment,

education, and training of police officers is not a simple task.

Historical Contexts

Richardson (1980) described early police agencies as being "charged with the

maintenance of order, the control of behavior in public places, and the prevention and detection

of crime" (p. 232). How this mission was accomplished has changed over the decades, yet the

demographics of police forces have not changed significantly. The majority of police officers

have been and continue to be White males (Delgado & Stefancic, 2016; Donahue, 2019; Suboch,

Harrington, & House, 2017). Since 2014, the profession of police officer has been significantly

scrutinized because of highly publicized use of force cases involving White police officers and

Black males (Adamson, 2016; Delgado & Stefancic, 2016; Nix & Pickett, 2017; Nix & Wolfe,

2016; Owusu-Bempah, 2016; Wolfe & Nix, 2016). Before 2014, the profession of policing had

not been without its critics. As early as 1931, the Wickersham Commission published the following statement:

> The general failure of the police to detect and arrest criminals guilty of the many
>
> murders, spectacular bank, pay-roll, and other hold-ups, and sensational robberies with
>
> guns, frequently resulting in the death of the robbed victim, has caused a loss of public
>
> confidence in the police of our country. (p. 337)

During the early years of the policing profession, not only were citizens mistrusting of police, hiring practices were disparate. The Wickersham Commission (1931) found recruits were selected for their political affiliations or because they passed civil service examinations that were limited in their ability to determine a recruit's fitness for duty. Now, 90 years later, minimum standards for hiring police officers exist; however, national standards do not exist as hiring standards are established by states and in some jurisdictions the hiring agencies (International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards & Training, 2019).

Raganella and White (2004) conducted research that was specific to the influence of race, gender, and motivation to become a police officer in the early 2000s, a shift from previous research into disparate hiring practices. Raganella and White (2004) concluded the motivation to become a police officer was similar across gender and race, however, the challenge to recruit minority officers was strongly related to recruitment messages. Raganella and White (2004) concluded recruitment efforts for the New York Police Department (NYPD) would improve if the recruitment efforts emphasized the helping nature of police work. A challenge to any message about the helping nature of policing being the well-documented lack of trust between police officers and minorities (Correll, Park, Judd, Wittenbrink, Sadler, & Keesee (2007); Doreian & Conti, 2014; Raganella & White, 2004). More recent research has determined high-

profile cases of use of force incidents have resulted in the perception there is a war on cops (Torres, Reling, & Hawdon, 2018), and this perceived war would also hinder recruitment efforts.

There has been a long-established history of mistrust between minorities and police. Deuchar, Fallik, and Crichlow (2019) stated citizens participating in a 2017 Gallup poll reported their vicarious experiences with law enforcement officers resulted in their belief neutrality, respect, and trust between the citizens and the officers was declining. Morin, Parker, Stepler, and Mercer (2017), in their research for the Pew Research Center, detailed that approximately 75% of the 8,000 officers surveyed believed there were increased tensions between police and Black community members since the highly-publicized, deadly encounters between police officers and Black males beginning in 2014. Doreian and Conti (2014) indicated a substantial barrier to recruiting African American officers stemmed from the negative image of police officers that was frequently held by minorities. This sentiment was supported in earlier research, cited by Raganella and White (2004), emphasizing the "negative attitudes of police held by young African Americans" (p. 501).

Examples of the mistrust between police and minorities are evident in conflicts documented in commission and task force reports. For example, *The Kerner Report* (1968) stemmed from an incident that occurred on July 23, 1967, when Detroit police officers raided an illegal after-hours drinking establishment; three days later 33 Blacks and 10 Whites were dead (Farley, 2018). Correll et al. (2007) determined police shootings of minority suspects "may engender a sense of mistrust and victimization among community members and give rise to conflict between the community and police" (p. 1006). In the 12 months, following the 2014 death of a Black, 19-year old man, at the hands of a White police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, an additional 15 incidents resulting in the deaths of minorities during interactions with police

officers received national attention (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017). The U.S. Department of

Justice, Civil Rights Division (2015) found a disconnect between the Ferguson, Missouri chief of

police, who thought "community-police relations were good" and the acknowledgment by city

and police leadership, as well as officers of varying ranks, of "a deep divide between police and

some Ferguson residents, particularly Black residents" (p. 80).

Former President Barack Obama established the President's Task Force on 21st Century

Policing (2015) in an effort "to strengthen community policing and trust among law enforcement

officers and the communities they serve" (p. iii). The task force determined the scope of law

enforcement was expanding and today's officers must be trained and capable of addressing a

wide variety of challenges including international terrorism, evolving technology, changing laws,

new cultural mores, and increasing mental health issues (President's Task Force on 21st Century

Policing, 2015). The task force also identified the need for a more diverse police force.

Social Contexts

Regarding social contexts, there were two dynamics to be considered, recruitment and

education. As stated in the historical contexts, there have been several calls throughout the past

century to increase diversity in police agencies. A literature review of terms including police

recruits, entrance-level police academies, and police recruitment, resulted in dated studies

focusing on the education level of police recruits, the pedagogical content of the police academy,

or the impact of the academies on the recruits' socialization. Smith and Aamodt (1997) studied

the relationship between education, experience, and police performance; Barker (2011) examined

higher-ordered thinking in police academy course development, and Obst and Davey (2003)

examined the long-term effects on socializing behavior that was developed during the police

academy. A search of the term policing post-Ferguson resulted in critiques of research into the

motivations of police officers. Deuchar et al. (2019) stated research into law enforcement officer perspectives was missing the "words of the officers" (p. 1046). Wolfe and Nix (2016), in their research about the existence of a Ferguson Effect, determined that researchers needed to ask the officers if the effect existed. No studies were identified that examined the experiences of minority police recruits while participating in the entrance-level police academy.

Recruitment, Education, and Motivation

Gaps in the research existed regarding recruitment, education, and motivation of police recruits. Recruitment research focused on the need for physical fitness standards (Aiello, 2019), recruitment efforts, including literature (Jolicoeur & Grant, 2017), as well as gender (Aiello, 2019) and race (O'Neill & Holdaway, 2007). Education research focused on the value of a college degree instead of a high school diploma or general equivalency degree (Hilal, Densley, & Jones, 2015; Smith & Aamodt, 1997). Research into the motivation of police recruits is recent (Donahue, 2019; Gibbs, Lee, & Bachnak 2018; Suboch et al., 2017).

Recruitment

The demographics of police recruits have been a consideration for both police agencies and the public for many decades. Raganella and White (2004) reported an underrepresentation of minorities in policing; attributing one reason for this underrepresentation to the negative attitudes of police that have been historically held by young African Americans. Katzenbach (1966) reported The Commission on Law Enforcement and Justice (1966) determined there was an obvious "distrust and disrespect for criminal justice among the poor-however law-abiding the vast majority are" (p. 1015). *The Kerner Report* (1968) concluded urban violence was the result of unequal treatment including the targeting of African American citizens by police (Reynolds, 2018). Wilson et al. (2010) referenced the historical difficulties police agencies have had

recruiting minorities. The U.S. Department of Justice (2016) reported the demographics of police academies were 15% female, and 30% members of a racial or ethnic minority with 13% identifying as Black, 13% identifying as Hispanic, and four percent identifying as other.

Education of Police Recruits

Researchers have examined the education standards for police recruits before their hiring. Smith and Aamodt (1997) cited the 1973 recommendation from the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals that all police recruits possess a minimum of three years of college education before being hired. The target date for this minimum education requirement to be met was 1978, yet it has never been realized (Smith & Aamodt, 1997). Requiring some level of college may contribute to a disparity between White recruits and minority recruits. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), college enrollment rates by ethnicity in 2018 were:

Table 1.1

Percentage of 18-24-year-olds enrolled in college in 2018

All Students	2-Year	4-Year	Male	Female	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
40.9	9.9	31	37.6	44.3	42.3	37.2	35.9	59

Note. National Center for Education Statistics (2020).

Criminal justice degrees in 2017 were awarded to approximately 48% White students, 24% Hispanic students, and 18% Black students (Data USA, 2020). An outlier was the Asian population, as NCES (2019) reported 65% of college students were Asian in 2017. Data USA (2020) reported only 3% of criminal justice majors were Asian in the same year.

Hilal et al., (2015) conducted a study on police applicants in Minnesota, a state that requires a minimum 2-year degree for all applicants. Hilal et al. (2015) researched the impact of signaling theory on being able to distinguish high-quality applicants from low-quality applicants. Hilal et al., (2015) concluded that recruitment efforts needed to begin before the applicant began their college-level studies as possession of a degree did not adequately prepare an individual for the realities of being a police officer. In Maryland, regardless of whether an individual has an advanced degree in criminal justice or a similar field, all police recruits are required to participate in entrance-level police training. In 2019, Maryland recruits were required to study and master 227 terminal objectives taught during a 30-week, 1,168-hour program (Maryland Law Enforcement, 2019). The requirement for college credits or an advanced degree beyond a high school diploma or equivalent was a standard established by each hiring agency in Maryland, yet attainment of a degree before or during the application process did not preclude the recruit from participating in the full entrance-level program.

Motivations of Police Recruits

Recognizing the majority of police officers were White males, this study sought to describe the experiences of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy. Research related to the experiences of minority police recruits during the process of application, participation in the academy, and field training are scarce. Despite the realization the profession of policing has evolved in complexity, the recruitment of minorities has remained stagnant. Research exists about the role of higher education and police recruitment (Barker, 2011); however, there is minimal research into the motivations of minorities to become police officers and to complete the entrance-level police academy.

Some of the existing literature about the motivations of minorities to become police officers have been reported by Donahue (2019); Gibbs, Lee, and Bachnak (2018); and Suboch et al. (2017). While Donahue focused on minority recruits, to include women, the published results of Donahue's research distinguished between women and minorities. Donahue (2019) reported the motivations of women and minorities differed from the motivations of White male applicants; specifically, he reported women were interested in proving their worth and minority applicants were interested in working with autonomy. Both women and minorities described being interested in opportunities for advancement (Donahue, 2019). A phenomenological research study conducted by Suboch et al. (2017) identified disparities between female and male officers. Suboch et al. (2017) concluded female officers reported the sense that they had to keep proving their ability to be police officers. For example, female officers perceived that if a man messed up a fight or was off target when firing his weapon that was an acceptable mistake; but if a woman messed up, it was because she was female (Suboch et al., 2017). This perception was reported by experienced female officers with two or more years on the job.

Theoretical Contexts

Despite research about how to attract minority candidates to a police agency, agencies continued to experience difficulty recruiting minorities. Donahue (2019) summarized the factors that resulted in attracting minority recruits to include: (a) the understanding larger agencies were more successful at recruiting minorities; (b) agencies engaged in community policing practices were more successful at attracting women; (c) unionization; (d) education requirements higher than a high school diploma; and (e) representation of minorities in higher-level positions.

Smith and Aamodt (1997) determined research about what attributes made a good officer were scarce. A literature review conducted in 2020 determined the literature about what makes a

good officer remained scarce. Common themes have identified characteristics of a good officer to include honesty, integrity, physical fitness, mental fitness, problem-solving abilities, and effective communication skills (Hilal, Densley, & Jones, 2015; Smith & Aamodt, 1997). Inconsistent or limited information about the characteristics and qualities of a good officer would hinder the recruitment efforts for any officer, regardless of majority or minority status. Similarly, the results of a literature review determined there was limited research into the motivations of police recruits to become officers.

Smith and Aamodt (1997) identified many of the same concerns as Delgado & Stefancic (2016), Donahue (2019), Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2017), the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015), and Suboch et al. (2017) regarding relationships between police officers and minorities. In their research Smith and Aamodt (1997) examined the political climate of the Vietnam War, reporting that police were frequently used for crowd control during protests and as government and political representatives; often conflicting with minorities. Police agencies were criticized during these times which contributed to the establishment of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice (Smith & Aamodt, 1997). An outcome of the 1967 report from the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice recommended a college education as a means to improve the performance of police officers in fulfillment of their duties and it was the relationship between possession of a higher degree and police performance that Smith and Aamodt (1997) explored.

Barker (2011) studied the ability of police academies to teach critical thinking skills. The focus of Barker's (2011) research was on the pedagogy of the academy, an area that had experienced little growth since the mid-1980s. Barker (2011) determined the need to teach critical thinking skills in the entrance-level academy was important because the academy was

essential for developing officers who could "make decisions within seconds of encountering an incident, employing sound reason and logic coupled with their technical skills" (pp. 2-3). Barker's research identified some of the attributes associated with police officers; however, research into these attributes is limited resulting in a gap in the literature.

Obst and Davey (2003) researched the long-term effects of socializing behavior on police officers by studying their drinking habits from their time in the academy throughout their careers. While there is limited research on recruit socialization in the academy, the research focused on the cohorts that formed due to an affiliation with the class as a whole or the subsets of squads that were arbitrarily formed when large classes were broken down into smaller squads by academy staff (Conti & Doreian, 2014). The limited research did not examine socialization between or among minority recruits.

None of the research results focused on the experiences of the police recruits before entering the academy or the motivation of the recruits to complete the academy. The most recent research by Todak, Huff, and James (2018) was with prospective police officers participating in a college police program. These prospective officers believed that racial diversity could be beneficial but many of the White participants identified their limited experience with minority communities (Todak et al., 2018).

This research described the lived experiences of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy. A transcendental phenomenological research study was conducted using interviews, a questionnaire, and document analysis. Sharing the experiences of minority police recruits, in their own words, provided insight into both recruitment and training recruits to be officers.

Situation to Self

My role in this research is both professional and personal. I am employed by the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, a state agency that houses the independent Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission (Commission). The Commission is recognized as the Police Officer Standards and Training (POST) agency, a term applied to the body that establishes training standards in the state in which it is located.

I currently work in the Office of Government and Legislative Affairs, where one of my duties is to analyze the impact of state laws pertaining to the training of public safety professionals, including police officers. I review and analyze selection standards for police and correctional officers in the state; and I have participated in the process of establishing and modifying standards in areas such as mental health evaluations, tactical response, and prior substance use/abuse by applicants. I have been an instructor of public safety professionals including correctional officers, Department of Juvenile Services employees, police officers, and adult parole and probation officers for over 15 years. I have presented at national conferences on the recruitment and retention of law enforcement professionals since 2016.

As I researched the experiences of minority police recruits who are participating in an entrance-level academy, I continued to be employed by the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; however, in this capacity, I had no direct contact with potential study participants. My research was conducted at POST certified municipal police academies in Maryland. Academies must teach the 227 terminal objectives mandated by the POST and aside from working for the agency that houses the POST, I did not have any influence on the recruits or the training objectives. I used a transcendental phenomenological research design to describe the experiences of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police

academy.

      I embarked upon my career in public safety in 1992 when I worked for the Department of Juvenile Services as a substance abuse assessor for detained youth in a 300-bed juvenile detention center. As a White female, I was one of a handful of Caucasian employees and the only White female to work in the detention units. Being raised in a small suburb, that was primarily middle-class Caucasian families, in another state, resulted in a mild culture shock when I began my career. I began working in an environment that employed approximately 5% White employees and 95% Black employees, I became aware of cultural differences quickly. I worked in this environment for almost seven years and assimilated into the culture of the detention environment. I received a Master's of Science degree in Community Psychology during the time I was employed at the detention facility and my research focused on the culture of the detention community. Almost 30 years later, I have witnessed the disparity in the number of minority police officers working in agencies throughout Maryland while seeing a reversal of these numbers for correctional officers employed at correctional facilities in the same state.

      According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), Maryland's estimated population in July 2019 was 58.8% White, 30.9% Black, 10.4% Hispanic, and 6.7% Asian, yet the majority of police recruits tend to reflect the national averages. I have also worked with correctional professionals in Maryland and have noticed that a high percentage of correctional officers tend to be minorities. There are significant differences in the standards for police officers and correctional officers, one being the education requirements for applicants and another being the length of each entrance-level academy. I was interested in studying the lived experiences of minority police recruits during the entrance-level police academy because of the disparities in race and ethnicity I have witnessed. I gained insight into the motivation of recruits to become

police officers during the academic phase of their training.

My philosophical approach was epistemological as I was interested in the information the recruits who were the subject of my research provided. Creswell and Poth (2018) described the implications for practice as including quotes from the research subjects as evidence of the research. Given that the focus of this research was on the lived experiences of the recruits, an epistemological assumption was a natural fit. The paradigm for my research was constructivism as I learned about the recruits' experiences that led up to their application to become police officers and their experiences while participating in the entrance-level police academy. Creswell and Poth (2018) described constructivism as allowing researchers to interpret their findings based on their own experiences and backgrounds. It would be negligent to believe that my professional experiences in police education did not influence my interest in this research.

Police officers are perceived as belonging to a culture colloquially known as the thin blue line. This culture is believed to begin in the police academy (Rahr & Rice, 2015). Doreian and Conti (2017) described the academy experience as the structuring and restructuring of recruit classes being essential for "creating a group conforming to the image and identity of police officers" (p. 84). Given that research has identified a divide between minorities and police officers for over a century, studying the experiences of minority police recruits during their time in the entrance-level police academy yielded research about what motivated recruits to become police officers and how they perceived the experience of the entrance-level police academy to support them as they prepared to become officers.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in the research was the disparity in the number of minority police recruits participating in entrance-level police academies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2016; Donahue,

2019; Raganella & White, 2004; Suboch et al., 2017; & U.S. Department of Justice, 2016). A common theme to emerge from special commissions and task forces over the past century has been the need for increased diversity in police departments. A conclusion of the Wickersham Commission in 1931 was a recommendation that police departments hire officers who were able to interact with the immigrant communities they served. *The Kerner Report* (1968) drew a similar conclusion, determining police departments needed to employ officers that resembled the communities they served. More recently, the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) concluded police agencies needed to be more diverse. The U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division (2015) reported that the demographics of Ferguson, Missouri were 67% Black, 29% White, 25% of the city's population lived below the federal poverty level, and the city was served by 54 sworn police officers, of which only four were African American. Rossler, Scheer, and Suttmoeller (2019) stated the historical perspective that recruiting officers of color was not a new challenge for police leadership.

Research regarding the recruitment of minorities to policing was minimal. Donahue (2019) summarized the factors that resulted in attracting minority recruits. Linos and Riesch (2019) described the difficulty of getting a job in policing once recruits started the process to become officers. Rossler et al. (2019) reported the challenge of recruiting minority applicants in the initial phases of hiring was hindered by either the inability to attract minority applicants or the screening out of minority recruits. The findings of Rossler et al. (2019) were similar to concerns raised by the Wickersham Commission (1931), *The Kerner Report* (1968), and the findings of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015). The existing literature highlighted the difficulty of attracting minority recruits. This research sought to understand the disparity of minority police recruits participating in entrance-level police academies.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy. The theories guiding this study were Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) and McClelland's needs theory (1973). Maslow's hierarchy of needs was essential to the research as it described the needs individuals must meet to attain self-actualization. Because of the culture of the entrance-level police academy and its paramilitary roots, the research considered the role of needs and the eventual self-actualization of the recruits. McClelland's needs theory was identified for its understanding of motivation. McClelland's needs theory was a motivational theory and allowed for research to be conducted examining the experiences of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy. Conducting a transcendental phenomenological research study allowed the recruits to provide a voice for their unique experiences. McClelland's needs theory maintained a premise that motives were learned and therefore would vary in strength based on an individual's socialization being rooted in their culture (van Emmerick et al., 2010). Considering the focus of this research was on the motivations of minorities to become police recruits, McClelland's theories about motivations spanned cultural differences and applied to this study. To better understand the influence of culture on minorities' decisions to become police officers, attitudes about policing were examined from the perspectives of minority groups including Black, Hispanic, and Asian cultures, as well as females.

Significance of the Study

The study contributed to the research about minorities in policing. Recognizing the long-standing call for an increase in the diversity of police officers, the results of the study increased

the literature about the motives of minority applicants to become police officers. The results also provided insight into the experiences recruits had while participating in entrance-level police academies.

Empirical

The research increased the literature regarding the experiences of minority police recruits participating in an entrance-level police academy. Additionally, participants provided a discourse for their motivations to become police officers, contributing to an increased understanding of recruitment, participation in the entrance-level academy, and future career goals. The lived experiences of police recruits assist recruiters to understand the motivations of police recruits to apply while also identifying community-based barriers. The lived experiences of the recruits assist academy directors to gain insight into the pros and cons of the entrance-level academy environment as it pertains to preparing recruits to become officers.

Theoretical

The results of the study contributed to the theoretical literature about motivation theory and needs theory. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) considered how individuals' basic needs should be met to assist them through the process of self-actualization. The entrance-level academy setting was capable of meeting individuals' basic needs while preparing them to enter a profession during which they may attain self-actualization. Understanding, from the perspective of the police recruits, how the academy met their needs contributed to a further understanding of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Participants provided insight into their assimilation into police culture and identified how their needs were met. Additionally, McClelland's needs theory (1973) described individuals' motivations as they related to achievement, affiliation, and power. Determining the motivations of participants as being affiliated with achievement, affiliation, or

power motives helps both recruitment and the entrance-level academy. Recruitment efforts could be targeted toward the individual motivation types while the content of the academy could be reviewed to ensure all aspects of the various motivations identified by McClelland are incorporated. Gaining insight into the motives that influenced individuals to become police officers assists researchers who are studying diversity in police agencies.

The practical significance of the study provided information to police agencies from the individuals they were recruiting to become police officers about their motivations to become officers. Research by Aiello (2019), Delgado & Stefancic (2016), Donahue (2019), Gibbs (20170, Gibbs et al. (2018), Jolicoeur and Grant (2017), O'Neill and Holdaway (2007), Raganella and White (2004), and Suboch et al. (2017), highlighted the challenges police agencies experienced trying to recruit minority applicants. Morin et al. (2017) reported a police shortage existed. Gaining insight into what motivates individuals to apply helps agencies with recruitment efforts. Learning about the experiences of the recruits and their perceptions of the entrance-level academy and how it was preparing them to become police officers helps the training academy personnel to understand how the training is being received and perceived.

Developing an understanding of what motivated individuals to become police officers helped gain a better understanding of the learning conditions minority recruits experienced. Insight was gained about how the recruit expected to perform as a police officer, both within the organization utilizing a career path and the community where the officer was required to work in patrol for a period of time before advancing professionally. On a broader scale, the recruits represented minorities in a position of authority who would be working in communities with a long history of distrusting law enforcement. During a time of police protests, citizen riots, and calls to defund the police, the voices of the recruits helped to continue to shape police legitimacy.

Research Questions

Recognizing the literature has advocated for a more diverse police force, it has become important to understand the experiences of minority police recruits who are in the process of becoming police officers. Gibbs et al. (2018) asserted one reason for the low recruitment of women and minorities was that these groups had fewer friends who were police officers. One central research question and three sub-questions guided this transcendental phenomenological research study.

Central Research Question

What were the lived experiences of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy?

The central research question focused on the experiences of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy. The research on motivation to become a police officer was abundant between 1960-1980, however, there had been no significant research conducted over the past 40 years (Morrow, Vickovic, Dario, & Shjarback, 2019). Conti and Doreian (2014) examined the role of race and socialization in police academy cohorts. Aiello (2019) identified barriers erected during the application and academy process, including education, socialization, and fitness standards, that impacted women. Aiello (2019) concluded the physical fitness standards were sufficient to dissuade women from even applying. Conti and Doreian (2014) also reported academies tended to be socially engineered in that a large cohort existed; however, recruits were placed into smaller peer groups referred to as squads and the squads interacted together throughout their academy time. Recognizing that earlier research pointed to the marginalization of African American officers from both the larger society and their own cultures; Conti and Doreian (2014) viewed recruits' segregation in a predominantly

White environment as marginalization. This marginalization was confounded by the socialization that occurred in the police academy. Nevers (2019) researched the reasons police recruits left the academy setting and determined the primary reason was personal, followed by injuries, and then career issues which participants described as determining while they were in the entrance-level academy that police work was not the career for them.

Sub-Question 1

How did minority police recruits describe their lived experiences to complete the entrance-level police academy and the academy experience?

The first sub-question was concerned with the recruits' motivations to complete the entrance-level police academy. As stated previously, the standards for the police academy recruits required mastery of 227 terminal objectives taught over 30 weeks, during a program that spanned 1,168 hours (Maryland Law Enforcement, 2019). Maslow's hierarchy of needs applied to how recruits were expected to describe their motivations to complete the entrance-level police academy given that the paramilitary nature of academies seeks to create a relationship of dependency (Rahr & Rice, 2015). Stoyanov (2017) in his analysis of Maslow's theory of human motivation summed the five levels as physiological needs, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Rahr and Rice (2015) described the paramilitary culture of the entrance-level police academy to include the breaking down of the recruit to re-establish him as a warrior. The process of breaking an individual down directly impacts the needs identified by Maslow.

Sub-Question 2

How did minority police recruits describe the support (or lack of support) they received from family members and friends once they decided to become police officers?

The second sub-question sought to understand the support (or lack of support) recruits received from family members and friends and provided insight into motivations. Reaves (2012) determined personal connections were one of the ways individuals were motivated to join the police department. Aiello (2019) reported the primary influence to become police officers were having family or friends who were officers. The support or lack of support recruits perceived related to both Maslow and McClelland. Recruits who felt supported by family and friends were at a higher level of self-actualization than those who did not perceive support. Whereas support (or lack of support) impacted the motivation of a recruit in the area of achievement, affiliation, or power, the three motivations identified by McClelland (1973).

Sub-Question 3

How do minority police recruits describe the recruitment process?

The third sub-question was interested in gaining an understanding of the recruitment process. Linos and Riesch (2020) reported the average amount of time from recruitment to training process was 43 weeks, although the researchers did not indicate if this included completion of the training academy. Additionally, Linos and Riesch (2020) determined only 10% of applicants made it to the third stage of the hiring process to become police officers with White and Hispanic applicants being the majority to persist through the process to reach the third stage. McClelland (1973) identified motivation as being driven by either a desire for achievement, affiliation, or power. Understanding the role these motivations play in seeing an individual through the lengthy recruitment process and completion of the academy contributed to the literature on both recruitment and the social and academic aspects of the entrance-level police academy.

Definitions

Key terms about the experiences of the recruits and the phenomena of the study are included below:

1. *Diversity* – A concept consisting of "the complete understanding and acceptance of all various and different human characteristics existing in the wider community" (p. 265), (Stergioulis, 2018).

2. *Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow)* – "A motivational theory in psychology comprising a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid." (McLeod, 2020).

3. *Minority* – "A culturally, ethnically, or racially distinct group that coexists with but is subordinate to a more dominant group. As the term is used in the social sciences, this subordinacy is the chief defining characteristic of a minority group." (Britannica, 2020).

4. *Needs Theory (McClelland)* – Regardless of our age, sex, race, or culture, all of us possess the need for achievement, affiliation, or power and are driven by it. (Kukreja, 2020).

5. *Police Legitimacy* – "Police legitimacy is granted when the public recognizes police authority, while the police comply with constitutional, statutory and professional norms" (p.8) (Espiritu, 2017).

6. *Procedural Justice* – "Concerns the perceived fairness of the procedures involved in decision making and the perceived treatment one receives from a decision-maker" (p. 407), (Murphy, Mazerolle, & Bennet, 2014).

Summary

Notwithstanding repeated calls for police departments to employ officers who represent the diversity of the communities served, the profession of police officer remains a White, male-dominated workforce (Delgado & Stefancic, 2016; Donahue, 2019; Suboch et al., 2017). Assorted commissions and task forces, as well as politicians, religious leaders, and community advocates, have decried the need for more diversity in police agencies (Adamson, 2016; Delgado & Stefancic, 2016; Nix & Pickett, 2017; Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Owusu-Bempah, 2016; & Wolfe & Nix, 2016). Despite the outcry for increased diversity in police agencies that has stemmed from increased media and social media reports of Black individuals dying as the result of use of force incidents with mostly White police officers since 2014, the number of minority police officers has remained consistently low (Delgado & Stefancic, 2016; Donahue, 2019; Suboch et al., 2017). Literature regarding the recruitment and training of minority police officers is limited. This research seeks to address the disparity of minority police recruits participating in an entrance-level police academy. Conducting a transcendental phenomenological study described the lived experiences of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Since 1931 there have been documented studies about the profession of policing that have highlighted a lack of trust between police and the communities they serve. A common recommendation of these studies has been for police departments to increase the diversity of their officers (U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2015). Almost 100 years ago, the Wickersham Commission (1931) highlighted the challenges American police agencies faced and how these challenges differed from those of their European counterparts by citing an increase in both the number of immigrants to the United States and an "influx in the number of Negroes" (p. 342). The Wickersham Commission's (1931) proposed solution was to "suggest that more police officers should be on each force who are of such races and familiar with their language, habits, customs, and cultural backgrounds." (p. 342). Wieslander (2019), in a study with police recruits that focused on diversity, found that the recruits echoed a similar sentiment with their belief that a lack of cultural knowledge created obstacles for them to be efficient in their performance as police officers.

Almost 100 years later, similar reports have highlighted similar needs. The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) concluded there needed to be an increase in the diversity of police departments and the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division concluded, in its 2015 report on the *Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department,* that approximately two-thirds of the citizens of Ferguson were African American, yet only four of the Ferguson Police Department's officers were African American. The authors of the report concurred that a lack of trust existed between the African American citizens of Ferguson and the police; however, they were not able to qualify their agreement because of factors such as African

American officers who abused their authority and the potential for these officers to undermine relations between communities and police departments (U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2015). Todak et al., (2018) reported a similarly held belief that Black citizens might not respond positively to Black officers The U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division (2015) recommended an increase in the diversity of the police department as one step that could be undertaken to change the culture of a police department that they determined "focuses on revenue generation and is infected by race bias" (p. 88). Todak et al. (2018) went one step further in their assertion it is important to diversify police agencies at all levels of command.

Despite calls for increased diversity, the effectiveness of an increasingly diverse police agency is unknown due to the low numbers of minority officers (Delgado & Stefancic, 2016; Donahue, 2019; Suboch et al., 2017; U.S. Department of Justice, 2016). Additionally, the lack of analysis of interactions between Black officers and fatal encounters with Black citizens has not been studied because the data did not exist until recently (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017). In their research, Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2017) were not able to conclude that the increased representation of Black officers would decrease the mistrust between police and minorities. The U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division (2015) echoed a similar belief, following its investigation of the Ferguson, Missouri Police Department when it concluded African American officers can violate the rights of African American civilians. The report stated, "Increasing a police department's racial diversity does not necessarily increase community trust or improve officer conduct" (U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2015, p. 88).

A common belief that has emerged in the research is that hiring more officers who resemble the citizens in the communities they serve will improve the relationships between police and citizens (Delgado & Stefancic, 2016; Donahue, 2019; President's Task Force on 21st

Century Policing, 2015; Suboch et al., 2017). Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2017) reported "increased diversity or representation of minorities is also proposed as a way to indirectly reduce violence by enhancing the legitimacy of the police force within communities" (p. 206). Calls for increased diversity echoed similar sentiments from the past. Raganella and White (2004) reported the pressure community groups, professional organizations, and their constituents exerted to diversify police departments.

This chapter identified the theoretical framework used to study the motivations of minority recruits to become police officers. The research was conducted with minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) applied to the theoretical framework of the research as police academies are structured to meet police recruits' most basic needs while helping to develop the recruits' self-actualization. Despite the structure of the entrance-level academy to meet these needs, research by Conti and Doreian (2014) highlighted the marginalization of recruits in the police academy. Todak et al. (2018) reported the skepticism held by minority officers who believed there were underlying intentions for their hiring and recruitment. This skepticism reflects components of self-categorization theory (Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly (1992). Self-categorization theory posits that people use social characteristics to promote self-identity (Tsui et al., 1992). Tsui et al. (1992) determined members tend to leave a group where social identity is unsatisfactory; a theory that could have been a contributing factor to the challenges related to the recruitment of minorities to police work.

McClelland's needs theory (1973) also contributed to the theoretical framework of this study because of its focus on motivation and its association with learning concepts (Pardee, 1990). This chapter considered related literature to include the challenges of limited diversity

among police recruits, understanding the motivations of minorities to become police officers, and highlighting existing barriers for minorities participating in an entrance-level police academy. This chapter also reviewed the challenges to recruitment that have occurred because of technological advances, resulting in a faster spread of derogatory and unsubstantiated information that frequently portrays interactions between police officers and citizens in a negative light, and is believed to have a detrimental effect on police recruitment-especially of minorities.

Theoretical Framework

Two theories of motivation that apply to the police recruit are Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) and McClelland's (1973) needs theory. Maslow's hierarchy examined motivations based on basic needs being met, resulting in the individual moving toward the fulfillment of higher-level needs (Stoyanov, 2017). McClelland considered an individual's motivation to be based on achievement, affiliation, or power motivations and posited that these motivations may have cultural influences (van Emmerick et al., 2010). McClelland's theory also built upon the belief that needs were addressed by coping with one's environment (Pardee, 1990). McClelland's work is often associated with the business world. Wieslander (2019) connected management literature to police organizations, reporting that management literature examined diversity in the workplace; finding both positive and negative effects.

Maslow (1943), a psychologist, was recognized for identifying a hierarchy of needs. The hierarchy is based on five levels with the foundational level being attributed to an individual's most basic needs. Stoyanov (2017) in his analysis of Maslow's theory of human motivation summed the five levels as physiological needs: safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow's hierarchy of needs can be viewed in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1

Hierarchy of Needs
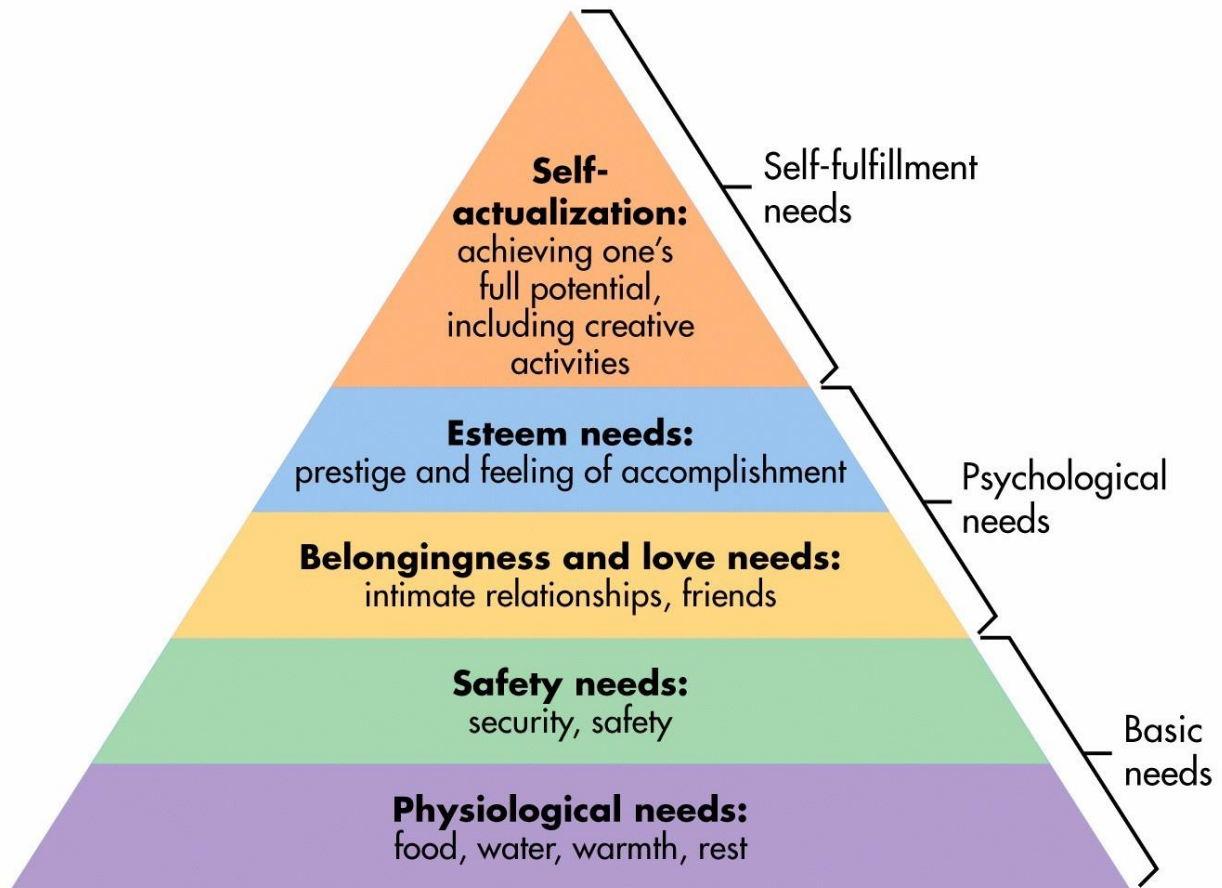
Note. Adapted from 2015 Abraham Maslow was a Brand Strategist

(http://wunderkindworld.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Maslow-hierarchy.jpg). In the public

domain.

Maslow did not purport that an individual must completely meet the first level of need to

advance to the next level of need; however, he did believe the levels advanced in order with the

ultimate goal being the attainment of self-actualization (Stoyanov, 2002). Abulof (2017)

modernized the term self-actualization for the 21st century, naming it authenticity. Abulof (2017)

described an individual's authenticity as wavering between being oneself and questioning

whether one is acting as himself (existentialist doubt). The conflict Abulof described emerges in the research of minority police officers who have been called traitors by members of their communities (Suboch et al., 2017). Abulof (2017) paid homage to the value of the hierarchy when he stated that it has survived for over 75 years and is known beyond the ivory tower.

Gupta (2002) compared the needs of police officers in India to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. At the most basic level of physiological needs, Gupta (2002) determined police agencies could meet these with adequate salaries, uniforms, and protection from extreme weather conditions. The academies in this study hired recruits before they entered the academy and provided them with a salary, uniforms, equipment, training, and in residential academies the most basic accommodations of food and shelter. Stewart, Nodoushani, and Stumpf (2018) echoed a similar belief in their research on employee cultivation and its relation to Maslow's hierarchy, attributing an individual's wages as satisfying a physiological need.

Maslow's next level of need was identified as safety. Gupta (2002) reported the challenges of meeting this need in the police profession. Specifically, Gupta determined insurance, pensions, gratuity, and retirement options could be attributed to meeting an individual's security needs. Stewart et al. (2018) referenced Maslow's explanation of job security and defined responsibilities and structure as allowing an individual's safety needs to be met. Circumstances during the past 3-4 years have directly challenged the safety and the profession of police officer. Cooper (2020) described a new police fragility, the inability of police and advocates to engage in honest and necessary conversations about race and profiling. The circumstances leading to the need for a discourse between police and activists included the protests and riots resulting from the deaths of Black males while in the custody of White police

officers. In 2020, the riots included the burning of a police station in Minneapolis, Minnesota (The Economist, 2020).

The level of social need, Maslow's third level, was described by Gupta (2002) as already existing in the police profession through the brotherhood of the profession. This brotherhood is colloquially referred to as the thin blue line. Stewart et al. (2018) referenced Maslow's attribution of positive work culture and rapport amongst peers as meeting the need for love or social need. Conti and Doreian (2014) offered research that suggested social needs may not be met in entrance-level police academies for minority recruits. Linos, Reinhard, and Rudis (2017) echoed a similar sentiment with their assertion minority applicants, who are underrepresented in the profession, may be more likely to be uncertain of their professional social bonds. Similarly, Todak et al. (2018) voiced skepticism for the underlying intentions in recruiting minority officers.

The fourth level in Maslow's hierarchy was esteem or recognition (Gupta, 2002). Gibbs (2019) researched the motivation of minorities to become police officers and identified prestige as one of the top 10 motivating factors. Gupta (2002) referred to prestige and power as characteristics demonstrating achievement of esteem or recognition. Stewart et al. (2018) described Maslow's perception of esteem as the existence of a positive work relationship between the employee and manager that allowed the employee to feel trusted and capable in his job. The lack of research into the relationship between the police recruit and supervisor (or higher ranking officers) indicated a gap in the literature.

Another type of prestige or recognition lies with a recruit's family or social group. However, some cultures do not support policing as a profession. Rigaux and Cunningham (2020) reported the distrust first and second-generation immigrants had for police because of

experiences they had had with them in their country of origin. Rigaux and Cunningham (2020) also reported the internal conflict becoming a police officer could cause in Chinese and Filipino families who did not understand the rigors involved in becoming a police officer.

The highest level of Maslow's hierarchy is self-actualization and Gupta (2002) interpreted an officer's promotion to a coveted role, such as a detective; or a high-ranking position, such as Deputy Chief or Chief, as meeting this need. Stewart et al. (2018) also referred to a promotion to a more challenging position as allowing an individual to meet the level of self-actualization. Stewart et al. (2018) expanded on this by referencing the role of the supervisor in engaging motivated employees to accept work that recognized their potential. Recruits who complete the entrance-level academy and field training may consider themselves to be self-actualized; however, considering the career of a police officer, many recruits may be motivated beyond graduation from the entrance-level academy and completion of field training. To understand the motivations of police recruits, McClelland's needs theory was utilized.

McClelland's needs theory considered an individual's motivation as being based on either achievement, affiliation, or power. Where Maslow focused on needs being met as a condition of advancement toward self-actualization, McClelland considered three separate factors that motivated individuals to accomplish goals. McClelland distinguished between implicit and explicit motives as they related to achievement, affiliation, and power motives (van Emmerick, Gardner, Wendt, & Fischer, 2010). McClelland's research was primarily in business and management; however, his research into motivation and the cultural influence on motivation applied to the focus of this research.

McClelland identified achievement motive, affiliation motive, and power motive (Woodside, Megehee, Isaksson, & Ferguson, 2020). According to Woodside et al. (2020),

achievement motive entails an individual's desire to "strive for success in particular situations in which a person's performance would be compared against some type of standard" (p. 42). The ability for recruits to demonstrate achievement motive exists within the entrance-level police academy as there are squads and squad leaders, test standards, and physical fitness standards. An individual who is motivated by achievement motive may strive to be a squad leader, the recruit with the highest grade point average, be the fittest, or best performer in one or more of the skills training venues.

Affiliation motive was described by Woodside et al. (2020) as "the motive to strive for positive, sometimes intimate, personal relationships; affiliation can include concern over establishing, maintaining, or restoring a positive affective relationship with another person or persons" (p. 42). During a time when police and citizen relations have been fractured by police officer use of force cases and the negative portrayals in the media and on social media in Missouri, Maryland, New York, and South Carolina (Adams, 2017; Adamson, 2016; Delgado & Stefancic, 2016; Gibbs, 2019; Nix & Pickett, 2017; Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Owusu-Bempah, 2016; & Wolfe & Nix, 2016), recruits may be driven by affiliation motive. Their motivation to become police officers may stem from a desire to establish or restore positive affective relationships with citizens.

Power motive was described by Woodside et al. (2020) "as the motive to strive to control other people for one's own goals or to achieve higher goals for the greater good" (p. 42). At face value, power motive does not seem like a good fit for a police recruit who is receiving training on the use of force – to include deadly force; however, the ability to restore order is also a component of power motive. Adams (2019) referred to the concept of de-policing, an event that was reported to have occurred in Baltimore, Maryland, in the wake of riots that occurred

following the death of a citizen in police custody in 2015. De-policing was viewed as a decrease

in the performance of regular duties as a means of retaliation or punishment (Adams, 2019,

Morgan & Pally, 2016). For example, Morgan and Pally (2016) suggested officers in the

Baltimore Police Department may have engaged in de-policing as a way to demonstrate their

dissatisfaction with politicians they perceived as turning their backs on them. A police recruit

may be motivated by a desire to restore order to a community, a powerful motive.

McClelland's needs theory maintained a premise that motives are learned and therefore

will vary in strength based on an individual's socialization being rooted in their culture (van

Emmerick et al., 2010). Considering the focus of this research is on the motivations of minorities

to become police recruits, McClelland's theories about motivations span cultural differences and

apply to this study. To better understand the influence of motivation on minorities' decisions to

become police officers, attitudes about policing were examined from the perspectives of minority

groups including Black, Hispanic, and Asian cultures, as well as females using McClelland's

theory of motivation.

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Related Literature

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Two recent reports from the President's Task Force on Policing in the 21st Century

(2015) and the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division's *Investigation of the Ferguson*

Police Department (2015), concluded police agencies should do more to expand the diversity of

their departments by recruiting and hiring qualified minority officers. Unfortunately, agencies

nationally are experiencing difficulty recruiting police officers in general (The Economist, 2017).

Despite the call for police agencies to increase diversity among their officers, the majority of

police agencies are comprised of White male officers (Gibbs, 2019; Suboch et al., 2017).

Theories abound as to why police agencies have been unable to recruit minority officers, with

recent research focused on the influence of highly publicized use of force cases as a deterrent for recruitment (Adamson, 2016; Delgado & Stefancic, 2016; Gibbs, 2019; Nix & Pickett, 2017; Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Owusu-Bempah, 2016; & Wolfe & Nix, 2016).

Police Legitimacy

Considering the diversity in police recruitment and ultimately the police force, the literature credits diversity as adding to the legitimacy of police agencies (Löfstrand & Uhnoo, 2014; Smith, 2003, & Wieslander, 2019). Espiritu (2017) stated, "Police legitimacy is granted when the public recognizes police authority, while the police comply with constitutional, statutory and professional norms" (p.8). Wieslander (2019) cited two benefits of increased diversity in police agencies; the first being that increased representation of different genders, races, and cultural backgrounds improved police legitimacy, and the second being additional contacts between minority and Caucasian officers might increase familiarity within the agencies leading to an increasingly positive view of minority communities. Stergioulis (2018) described diversity as "gender, race, ethnicity, age, social and economic status, religious and/or other beliefs that identify a person or a social group are the key features of the complex concept of diversity" (p. 265). Todak et al. (2018) saw the value of cultural diversity as stemming from the image projected to the public.

Wieslander (2019) identified controversies in applying diversity beliefs to police agencies, stating increased diversity in the police through targeted recruitment would enhance relations with society and improve the work practices of officers when interacting with individuals of different ethnicities in society. Yet, Todak et al. (2018) determined Black citizens may not have as positive a response to Black officers as expected. Löfstrand and Uhnoo (2014) stated there was an assumption minorities brought unique skills and perspectives because of their

backgrounds that would promote equality and non-discrimination. Yet, a report about practices

in the Ferguson (MO) Police Department indicated minority police officers could hinder police

relations with minority communities like that of White police officers (U.S. Department of

Justice Civil Rights Division, 2015). Espiritu (2017) reported the Baltimore City (Maryland)

police department was 42% Black compared to the general population that was 63% Black at the

time of the death of Freddy Gray in 2015. Despite the agency's higher percentage of minority

officers, the U.S. Justice Department (2016) in their investigation of the Baltimore City Police

Department concluded a disproportionate rate in the number of stops, searches, and arrests of

African American citizens.

      Brunson and Gau (2011) identified an agency's resources or lack of resources as

impacting an individual's desire to become a police officer. In their research, Brunson and Gau

(2011) interviewed 44 African American adults living in East St. Louis, Illinois. The

demographics of the police department serving these citizens consisted of 62 officers in 2009,

four White and 58 Black officers. The results of the research indicated that race was not a factor

in interactions with the police. Instead, factors such as time to respond and perceived inability to

solve crimes influenced citizens' attitudes about police (Brunson & Gau, 2011). While this

research is dated, it is one of the few research studies conducted in which the demographics of

the police department are aligned with the demographics of the community being served.

Interestingly, Shjarback, Decker, Rojek, and Brunson (2017) reported: "Though only a few

empirical studies have tested the potential benefits of greater minority representation in law

enforcement, the results thus far are generally unsupportive across several outcomes of interest"

(p. 750). For example, civil rights complaints of police brutality tended to be lower against

Hispanic officers, but the same pattern was not reported for Black officers (Shjarback et al.,

2017). An additional note that emerged from the research of Brunson and Gau (2011) was that citizens had a favorable opinion of other police agencies they had contact with who had better resources.

Löfstrand and Uhnoo (2014) countered that increased diversity could be viewed as symbolic. The concept of increased diversity being symbolic has credibility as Smith (2003) and Raganella and White (2004) cited the lack of diversity in higher ranking positions and the challenges of promotional opportunities for minority officers. Todak et al. (2018) reported Hispanic officers found the promotion practices in their organizations to favor the advancement of White officers' careers. Limited abilities for promotion and the lack of inclusion for minority officers in high ranking positions as described by Guajardo (2015), Suboch et al. (2017), and Todak et al. (2018) are factors that can inhibit an individual's progression through Maslow's hierarchy of needs and impact self-actualization.

Police agencies are challenged with recruiting new applicants to become police officers and helping them to be successful in their training so they may become officers (Wright et al., 2010). Antrobus, Thompson, and Ariel (2018) discussed the multidimensional aspects of police legitimacy and addressed the contributions of procedural justice to promote police legitimacy. Murphy, Mazerolle, and Bennett (2014) defined procedural justice as concerning "the perceived fairness of the procedures involved in decision making and the perceived treatment one receives from a decision-maker" (p. 407). In recent years, the concept of procedural justice has been included in discussions about police training. A conclusion of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) identified the need for procedural justice. It is believed that procedurally just treatment of citizens by police will result in improved relations between citizens and police as well as increased cooperation (Antrobus et al., 2018). It is also believed that introducing

procedural justice training during the recruit academy will enhance citizen-police interactions (Antrobus et al., 2018). Although not an immediate solution, training recruits in procedural justice could result in improved police-community relations and could allow agencies to use their newest officers to help recruit.

To be effective, research regarding individuals' motivations to become police officers is essential to all aspects of policing (Wright et al., 2010). Recruiters need to understand the motivation of applicants to target recruitment efforts (Orrick, 2007). Instructors need to understand the motivation of recruits to ensure classroom instruction engages the recruit during the entrance-level academy and throughout their career (Cordner & Shain, 2011; Rahr & Rice, 2015). Field training officers need to understand the motivation of recruits to leverage it so recruits can complete the final stage of training and transition to their duties as patrol officers (Caro, 2011). Supervisors should understand the motivation of officers to effectively supervise them and guide them through their careers (Rahr & Rice, 2015; Wright et al., 2010).

Technology, Media, Social Media, Advocacy, and Recruitment

Although the focus of this research was not on police recruitment, it is important to understand that the recruitment of qualified police candidates has changed during the past century. Police recruitment has often been affiliated with family ties to the profession. Aiello (2019) noted recruits frequently cited the influence of family members and friends with backgrounds in policing as the impetus for their desire to pursue a career in law enforcement. Suboch et al. (2017) reported these same influences as the reasons many minority officers resigned early in their careers. In their research, Suboch et al. (2017) reported Black and Hispanic officers stated they were viewed as traitors when serving in the communities to which they had ties.

Technology

Technology in the 21st century is increasingly being used as a recruitment tool. Aiello (2019) determined internet-based recruiting materials were the most cited motivator outside of family and friends. For all of its benefits, a drawback of technology in the 21st century is that it allows information to spread faster, with little regard for accuracy. Adams (2019) referenced a digital era in which adverse interactions between police and citizens spread nationally and internationally, resulting in a negative effect between police and citizens. One name that has been given to this effect is the "*Ferguson Effect*" (Adams, 2019; Espiritu, 2017; Wolfe & Nix, 2016).

Adams (2019) defined the Ferguson Effect as "negatively publicized police-citizen interactions in the media, followed by a subsequent de-policing of police in the United States" (p. 1747). Morgan and Pally (2016) defined the Ferguson Effect as existing "if the number of crime incidents recorded after the beginning of the Ferguson period differs from the number that would have been recorded if the events in Ferguson had not set off a shift in the national dialogue on policing" (p. 13). The actual existence of a Ferguson Effect is debated (Morgan & Pally, 2016).

Despite debate about the existence of a Ferguson Effect, the rise of advocacy groups such as #BlackLivesMatter can be directly attributed to the negative portrayals of use of force incidents between police officers and Black citizens (Havercroft & Owen, 2016). It would be negligent to fail to consider the effects social media and the media have had on the strained relationship between police and citizens and the potential impact this could have on the motivations of minorities to become police officers with components of these motivations applying to any of McClelland's motives, achievement, affiliation, and power. The most recent of

these examples was the death of a Black citizen at the hands of a White police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This death on May 25, 2020, has resulted in protests in 75 cities throughout the US and the calling up of the National Guard by governors in 11 cities (The Economist, 2020).

Media

Despite the negative portrayals of police in media and social media, media has the potential to strengthen relations between police and communities. Beshears (2017) highlighted the potential for police and communities to use social media for information exchanges between police and community members. Used correctly, social media allows police agencies to provide transparency by providing updates to those who follow the agency's social media accounts. Beshears (2017 provided examples of this transparency including current information about sex offenders in the community, upcoming community events, missing individuals, and request assistance solving crimes. Grygiel and Lysak (2020) detailed an example of the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia using social media to provide information about an ongoing situation by airing a live-stream interview with the assistant chief of police who was at the scene of the incident. To the casual observer, the live-streamed interview would have appeared to be a news report with an independent reporter but instead, the police were able to control the information being released in a format that is familiar to the average person (Grygiel & Lysak, 2020).

Social Media

Social media may also motivate individuals to begin the process to become police officers. Jolicoeur and Grant (2018) studied the influence of images of police officers performing various duties that were used in recruitment brochures on the motivation of individuals to apply

to police agencies. Jolicoeur and Grant (2018) determined that brochures showing police officers engaged in enforcement activities were more successful than brochures depicting police officers engaged in service-oriented activities such as frequent, informal engagement with community members to identify broader citizen concerns. Aiello (2020) built on the research of Jolicoeur and Grant concluding there was a relationship between recruitment materials and the attraction of applicants, specifically women. Aiello (2020) was able to determine that brochures highlighting the service-oriented nature of policing and Community Oriented Policing were more successful in attracting female candidates. Leott (2019) stated 61.9% of police agencies were leveraging social media platforms to attract recruits. Leott (2019) also reported social media had curtailed 57.7% of applicants' efforts to become police officers because of its problematic content.

Social media has the potential to attract new applicants, yet social media is a double-edged sword. In addition to attracting applicants, social media has the potential to eliminate potential hires. Leott (2019) drew attention to the ability of social networks to provide insight into the daily lives of users. Screening by social media has become a practice used during the police recruitment process as it can render the applicant ineligible for police work (Leott, 2019). Specific indicators of a person's ineligibility for a career in policing that may be revealed during a review of social media posts include mental health issues, lack of impulse control, discriminatory practices, and dishonesty (Leott, 2019). Charniga (2020) stated the off-duty conduct of employees can negatively impact the employer. Charniga (2020) described a tweet posted on Twitter of an individual who set up a racist video and in the process of filming it, recorded himself wearing his employer's uniform with the logo easily seen by individuals viewing the video linked to the tweet. The Twitter user came across as mentally unstable (sitting

in a window pointing an assault rifle at a car on the street) and racist (making comments about

the riots that followed the death of a Black male while he was in police custody (Charniga,

2020). The employer received threats to the business and employees if they did not fire the

individual – he was fired (Charniga, 2020).

Advocacy

A 2019 article published in *The Economist* referenced a private social media page

established by members of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency that included racist

comments and misogynist memes directed toward Latina politicians. The difference between this

page and some of the advocacy groups that have emerged in response to police in-custody deaths

has been the openness of the comments and the public nature of the memes. Banks (2018)

reported Black Lives Matter (BLM) originated from a social media post from one woman that

was responded to by her friend with #blacklivesmatter. The friends, who considered themselves

advocates, partnered with another advocate and together they created Twitter and Tumblr

accounts encouraging Black people to share their stories about why #blacklivesmatter" (p. 710).

Another advocacy group that has emerged, whether in response to or as a result of

#blacklivesmatter, was Blue Lives Matter. Cooper (2020) described Blue Lives Matter as a pro-

police movement highlighting a war on police. Cooper (2020) attributed the calls for police to be

attacked as similar to attacks on groups that have been historically oppressed. Similar to BLM,

Blue Lives Matter began on a social media page in 2014 following the murder of two police

officers (Cooper, 2020).

It is important to understand that advocacy groups that began innocuously, have

contributed to a myriad of protests, violence, and public outcry. *The Economist* (2020) clarified

that social media posts can be political in nature and reflect opinions held by Americans. It does

not matter if the opinions are those of a few voices or many, the anonymity of social media gives voice to the views of many regardless of how offensive. A current cry uttered by advocacy groups in the mainstream media and on social media involves defunding the police. Clarke (2020) described calls to defund the police as being a knee-jerk reaction, while noting action was being taken as recently as June 2020 by House Democrats to introduce and pass police reform legislation as soon as July 2020. Emerging from the calls to defund the police are criticisms of young police officers.

Dr. Haberfield, a professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York, attributed police problems to the recruitment and training of new officers (Clarke, 2020). Specifically, Dr. Haberfield condoned police agencies for hiring recruits who were too young, too immature, and poorly trained (Clarke, 2020). During a time of social unrest and attacks on police, one may question why anyone would want to become a police officer.

Challenges of Diversity in Police Applicants

A common belief that has re-emerged in the research was that hiring more officers who resemble the citizens in the communities they serve would improve the relationships between police and citizens. Smith (2003) stated "representation by minorities and women on police forces is an often-quoted strategy for police reform"; (p. 149). Whereas Wieslander (2019) reported: "diversity is endorsed as a resource that contributes to improving the organisation, lending legitimacy to the police and its operations, creating a more attractive work environment, and helping make police work more efficient" (p. 2). Stergioulis (2018) examined the effects of adopting multiple steps to improve police and citizen relations in England and concluded:

adoption of a concrete strategy and the establishment of special structures within the

police force focusing on the protection of diversity contributes significantly to the

consolidation of public confidence in the police, whilst the police work is surrounded by

the active support of citizens and the community authorities. (p. 267)

Rossler et al. (2019) stated the historical perspective that recruiting officers of color was

not a new challenge for police leadership while highlighting the barriers for applicants including

social approval, respect for police, awareness of the option of a police career, personal

background issues, and perceptions of how police operate. Todak et al. (2018) focused on the

familial barriers for minority recruits to include mistrust of police and a lack of respect for the

profession. Linos et al. (2017) suggested educational test-taking and racial performance gaps

could be a barrier for minority police applicants. Schroedel, Frisch, August, Kalogris, and

Perkins (1994) identified specific barriers for Asian applicants to include a perception of Asians

as timid, in a profession that is known to be assertive, as well as accent issues during oral

interviews. Guajardo (2015) cited research confirming some police agencies had no Asian

officers.

Although there has been a historic recognition that there is a need for increased diversity

in police departments, hiring still lags. Donahue (2019) summarized the factors that resulted in

attracting minority recruits to include the understanding larger agencies were more successful at

recruiting minorities, agencies engaging in community policing practices have been more

successful at attracting women, unionization, education requirements above a high school

diploma, and representation of minorities in higher-level positions all contributed to improved

recruitment. The difficulties in hiring minorities occur in the initial phases of the hiring process.

Rigaux and Cunningham (2020) identified some of the barriers to recruitment of minorities in

Canada as the amount of time required to become an officer, submitting to a credit check,

aptitude tests, and bans on criminal records.

Rossler et al. (2019) determined the challenge of recruiting minority applicants in the initial phases of hiring was hindered by either the attraction of minority applicants or the screening out of minority recruits. The findings of Rossler et al. (2019) are similar to concerns raised by the Wickersham Commission in 1931. Linos et al. (2017) reported a subjective bias in recruitment that found applicants with Black sounding names were called back less frequently than applicants who did not have Black sounding names when the applicants had similar resumes. The focus of this study was on the applicants who have completed the hiring phase and were participating in the entrance-level academy.

Despite the commonly held belief police agencies need to recruit more minorities, research into the recruitment of minorities is dated. Chu (2018) reported that a proliferation of research on the aspects of the work of the female police officer had emerged during the past several decades; while also stating studies about the female police officer's motivation to become an officer were limited. In Chu's review of the research, the studies cited spanned the years 1965–2001 and reported the motivations of females to become police were out of a desire to help others (altruistic). Gibbs et al. (2018) also examined the motivations of women to become police officers and reported six motivators cited by women to become police officers. These motivators included "salary, opportunity to help others, interesting work, law enforcement orientation, and security" (p. 4). The sixth motivator was family influence, yet despite it being listed as sixth, it was the most cited reason in interviews (Gibbs et al., 2018). Chu (2018) did cite a 2010 study of 210 female officers in Korea by Kim and Merlo that reported adventure and a positive perception of police work as motivations to apply. Linos (2018) determined, using a targeted field experiment, the two primary factors that resulted in increased applications were recruitments highlighting the challenges of being a police officer and the job security of a long-term career.

In another study, Gibbs (2019) referenced the dated studies on the motivations of women to become police officers. Gibbs concluded researchers found female applicants to have similar motives to male applicants. Prior research into the motivations of individuals to become police officers had consisted of providing research subjects with a list of motivations for wanting to become a police officer (Gibbs, 2019). Limiting the choices to a list of motivations is believed to be the reason why male and female applicants report similar motivations (Gibbs, 2019). The literature of Chu (2018), Gibbs (2019), and Gibbs et al., (2018) expanded beliefs about the motivations of female officers beyond the commonly cited motivation of altruism (Raganella & White, 2014).

Guajardo (2015) reported how data was collected on minority recruits was disparate, specifically identifying a lack of both organizational and hierarchical data. At an organizational level, Guajardo (2015) found there was little research regarding workforce diversity before an increase in the employment of minorities. At the hierarchical level, Guajardo (2015) reported little research regarding the diversity within and between police ranks. Where Löfstrand and Uhnoo (2014) reported ethnic diversity in the workplace was viewed as necessary for the ability to claim, achieve, and legitimize the profession; Guajardo (2015) reported that achieving ethnic diversity was not being adequately researched. Wieslander (2019) expanded on the barriers to achieving ethnic diversity with the assertion, that talk about increased diversity is not equivalent to the actions taken to improve diversity and police legitimacy. Todak et al. (2018) highlighted the need to diversify all levels of command in police agencies.

Understanding the Motivations of Minorities to Become Police Officers

Raganella and White (2004), in their research on the motivations of minorities to become police officers, determined the top motivations of both males and females were altruistic and

related to job benefits and job security. Gibbs (2019) conducted focused research, using open-ended questions about the motivations of minorities to become police officers and reported the motivations extended beyond altruism, job benefits, and job security, as shown in Table 2.1. Although the research was limited to a small sample, Gibbs (2019) developed contemporary data about the motivations of police applicants.

Table 2.1

The top reason for applying to police by percent of each race/ethnicity

Top reason	Black (n=63)	Hispanic (n=48)	Asian/Pacific Islander (n=19)	Other race/ ethnicity (n=8)
Could not articulate	23.8	23.9	42.1	25.0
Childhood dream	17.5	12.5	0	0
Military background	15.9	4.2	15.8	12.5
Make a difference	12.7	10.4	21.1	12.5
Job security	6.3	12.5	5.3	0
Prestige	6.3	10.4	10.5	25.0
Criminal justice degree	4.8	10.4	0	0
Salary/benefits	3.4	4.2	5.3	25.0
Legacy	0	2.1	0	0
Other reason	9.5	10.4	0	0

Note. N = 68.

Donahue (2019) reported the motivations of women and minorities differed from the motivations of White male applicants; specifically, it was determined women were interested in proving their worth and minority applicants were interested in working with autonomy (Donahue, 2019). Both women and minorities reported being interested in opportunities for advancement (Donahue, 2019). Much of the current research into the recruitment of minorities to become police officers highlighted the barriers that contributed to the avoidance of the profession. Rossler et al. (2019) identified reasons why non-White recruits avoided the occupation, including their perception of racism by police officers and agencies or as the result of negative interactions with police officers. Rigaux and Cunningham (2020) reported age, aptitude tests, and credit checks; as well as a lack of trust and understanding of the police. Suboch et al. (2017) researched the barriers for minorities to remain police officers. Building on the work of earlier researchers who determined a lack of family, community, and peer support leading to minority officers leaving the profession, Suboch et al. (2017) determined gender and ethnicity also influenced officers' decisions to leave the profession. To further explore the motivations of minorities to become police officers, McClelland's needs theory provided a foundation for research as it considered three separate motivations–achievement, affiliation, and power.

Power Motives and Existing Barriers for Police Recruits

McClelland identified power motives as one motivation of needs theory. McClelland and Watson (1973) concluded: "that the incentive for a power-oriented person is to "have impact," to "stand out" in some way, or to be considered important" (p. 123). An examination of the barriers to recruiting minority applicants indicated one barrier was the perception of the abuses of power reported to occur in police agencies. Colvin (2015) highlighted research results that promulgated

the historical motivation of individuals to become police officers was in their need for power, authority, and control stemming from authoritarian personalities. Unprofessional behaviors about racism and sexual harassment have been attributed to the police culture (Rossler et al., 2019; Gibbs, 2019; Raganella & White, 2004). Racism, sexually harassing remarks, violations of use of force are all factors attributed to an individual having power over another person or group of persons (Rossler et al., 2019). Research into gay and lesbian police recruits found that perceptions, when shared, did harm the operations and productivity of a police agency (Colvin, 2015). These negative actions are aligned with McClelland's beliefs about power motives as presenting negatively. Suboch et al. (2017) expanded on this research by examining the reasons minorities leave the profession of policing.

One area that Suboch et al. (2017) identified was the powerlessness minority officers perceived they experienced regarding advancement into specialized positions. Guajardo (2015) studied diversity in the New York Police Department and determined diversity decreased as police rank increased. In addition to the specialized areas lacking diversity, Suboch et al. (2017) reported Black and Hispanic officers, "verbalized subtle and unconscious racism in the form of a lack of opportunities, positions, and mentoring for some ethnicities" (p. 8).

While researching power motives, McClelland reported that power could be exercised in a positive manner such as mentoring others, or in negative ways such as trying to win arguments or being aggressive (McClelland & Watson, 1973). Given the number of high profile incidents involving minorities and police officers (Donahue, 2019; Gibbs, 2019; Lum & Nagin, 2017; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017; Rossler, 2019), it is essential to gain insight into the perceptions of police recruits about their understanding of the negative portrayal of power in police agencies and to understand their power motives for joining police agencies. Espiritu (2017) stated,

"Having a diverse workforce will lead to diverse perspectives, which can enhance services to a culturally diverse community" (p. 11). There is power in being able to enhance services.

Affiliation Motives and Existing Barriers for Police Recruits

McClelland's needs theory also identified affiliation motives, which were described as the desire to be with other people (McClelland, 1987). Wilson, Wilson, and Gwann (2016) asserted "the culture of the organization and its social performance may have an impact on its attractiveness to potential candidates" (p. 237). Social performance for police has been viewed negatively due to the high number of use of force incidents that have occurred between White officers and minorities (Rossler et al., 2019; Lum & Nagin, 2017). Smith (2003) reported multiple commissions examining police legitimacy concluded that long-standing tensions between citizens and police were the underlying cause of riots and the precipitating incident leading to the riots was often the result of a confrontation between the police and citizens. In research conducted post-Ferguson, Todak (2017) reported that college students recognized the negative attitudes held toward police yet found these same students were attracted to police work out of a desire to prove police were good and to contradict cultural beliefs.

A potential barrier that exists for minority applicants who are motivated by affiliation could be the opposition to their career choice by their friends and family. Rossler et al. (2019) expressed the opposition of friends and family as well as the role of a police officer being counterintuitive to an individual's identity. Much of the literature interspersed throughout this paper references an innate distrust between Blacks and the police. Espiritu (2017) asserted a belief among some minority groups that race is a contributing factor to use of force incidents by police officers. Suboch et al. (2017) reported Black and Hispanic officers were considered traitors by members of their own cultures. Rigaux and Cunningham (2020) cited a report by a

minority recruit whose father disapproved of his decision to become a police officer until his father's customers shared their positive support of police officers and the support increased once his father understood police work was not a profession for someone who just had a high school diploma. The affiliation, in this case, was positive acceptance by the father's customer base with whom the father is affiliated and a greater understanding of the role of education.

All minority groups are underrepresented in police agencies (Gibbs et al., 2018). Consider the underrepresentation of Asian officers in policing. There is minimal research on Asian police officers or Asian-American police officers. Guajardo (2015) cited research indicating some agencies had not hired one Asian officer, despite Asian citizens living in the community. Research by Schroedel et al. (1994) determined Asian male police officers comprised 1.1% of police officers nationwide, despite Asians comprising three percent of the population, they also determined female Asian officers comprised .19% of all sworn officers. When affiliation is considered as a motive for application, it should be noted Asian recruits have the lowest percentage of peers.

Achievement Motives and Existing Barriers for Police Recruits

A third motivation identified by McClelland was the achievement motive. Woodside et al. (2020) described achievement motives as an individual's desire for success as measured against a standard. Police recruitment lends itself to those who are motivated by the achievement that can be measured against standards. Entry into police work frequently involves written and oral exams as well as meeting established physical fitness requirements. One barrier may be the number of steps in the process of applying that can be seen in Figure 2.1 (Linos & Riesch, 2020).

Figure 2.2

Recruitment Steps for the Los Angeles Police Department Before October 2017

```
┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐
│   Preliminary   │     │                 │     │    Personal     │     │                 │
│   Background    │ ──> │     Personal    │ ──> │     History     │ ──> │    Polygraph    │
│   Application   │     │  Qualifications │     │    Statement    │     │      Test       │
│     (PBA)       │     │   Essay (PQE)   │     │      (PHS)      │     │                 │
└─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘
        │                                                                        │
        ▽                                                                        │
┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐
│    Physical     │     │                 │     │                 │     │    Physical     │
│  Abilities Test │ ──> │   Department    │ ──> │   Medical Exam  │ ──> │  Abilities Test │
│    1 (PAT1)     │     │    Interview    │     │                 │     │    2 (PAT2)     │
└─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘
        │
        ▽
┌─────────────────┐
│  Psychological  │
│      Exam       │
└─────────────────┘
```
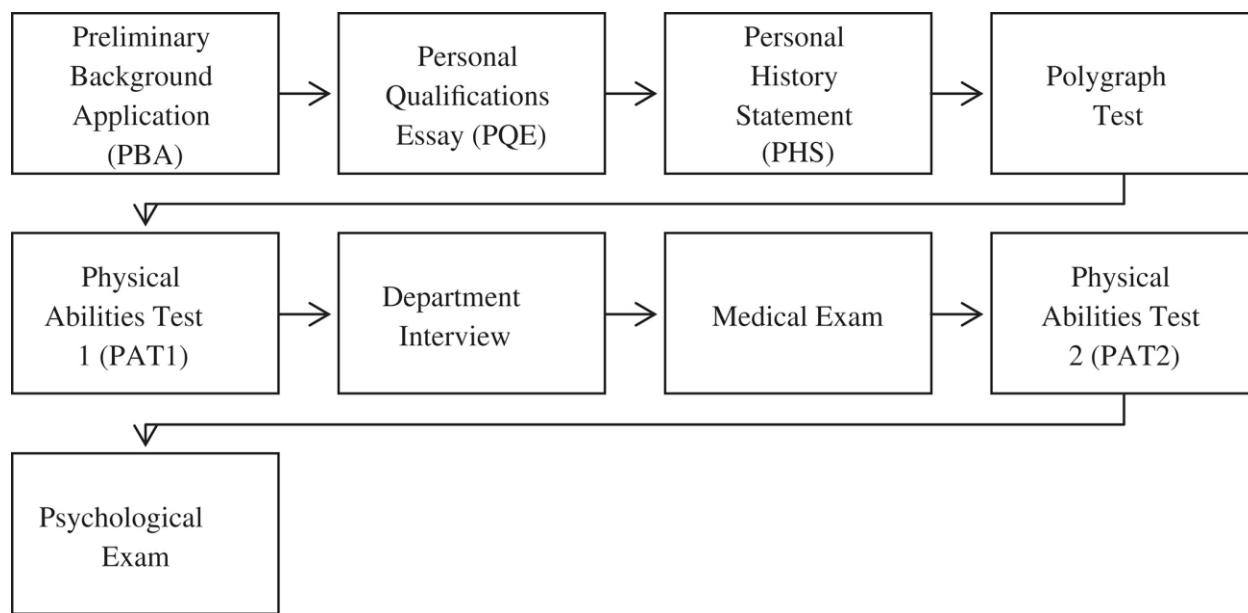
Although the potential to demonstrate achievement in the steps shown in Figure 2.1 may be motivational to someone who is driven by achievement motives, many factors may present as barriers including the ability to effectively communicate during an interview, physical fitness tests, and the types of exams administered. As stated previously Schroedel et al. (1994) cited the potential for an Asian applicant's accent to hinder the department interview. Higher obesity rates are attributed to minorities (Young, Graff, Fernandez-Rhodes, & North, 2018), and these increased rates could serve as a barrier to the recruitment of minorities. Linos et al. (2017) reported racial performance gaps in test-taking.

An additional factor that can negatively be tied into achievement motives is the lack of high ranking minorities in command positions (Rigaux & Cunningham, 2020). Donahue (2019) cited the motivations of women and Hispanic recruits as being advancement. Todak et al. (2018) cited the viewpoint held by Hispanic officers that their organizations favored the promotion of White officers.

Summary

A review of the research for this study has determined that there is a historical belief that police agencies should recruit officers who are representative of the diverse populations served (Suboch et al., 2017). Despite this long-standing belief, the challenge to recruit minority police officers exists and the recruitment numbers for minorities have remained static (Reaves, 2016). Numerous studies have been found that highlighted barriers to recruitment including an overt distrust for police by members of largely Black communities (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017; Raganella & White, 2004) and long-standing recruitment processes that result in recruits being selected out (Doreian & Conti, 2014).

This chapter presented information about the theoretical framework guiding the study, McClelland's needs theory, and its relationship to achievement motives, affiliation motives, and power motives. Maslow's hierarchy of needs was also included as it pertained to the basic needs a recruit is expected to have met upon entry into the academy while also applying to how continuing to meet the individual's needs will help the recruit grow professionally. Gupta (2004) demonstrated how Maslow's hierarchy applied to policing. McClelland (1973) was selected because of the premise that there are basic needs that must be met to motivate an individual to higher levels of awareness and achievement. McClelland's needs theory was selected for the clear distinction in motivation types, achievement, affiliation, and power motives that influence potential recruits. Applying an understanding of each of the types of McClelland's motives to a transcendental phenomenological research approach is expected to increase understanding of what motivates minorities to participate in entrance-level police academies.

This chapter also reviewed the existing literature about minorities and policing. Chu (2018), Gibbs et al. (2018), Gibbs (2019), Linos et al. (2017), Raganella and White (2004), and

Rossler et al. (2019) all highlighted the limited nature of research about minorities applying to become police officers. Police legitimacy and procedural justice were discussed for the belief that an increase in police legitimacy could improve recruitment efforts.

Lacking in the available literature was recent research into the motivations of minorities to become police recruits. Much of the existing literature was static in how it reported the motivations of minority police officers to apply to academies, relying on the beliefs that their motivations are altruistic or related to job benefits and job security (Raganella & White, 2004). Conti and Doreian (2014) were the only researchers to examine the experiences of minority recruits in the academy setting, indicating a gap in the literature; whereas Suboch et al. (2017) researched the motives of minority police officers to leave the profession early in their careers.

A gap identified in the literature was the lack of any research into the experiences of minorities while they were participating in the police academy setting. Rahr and Rice (2015) examined the academy setting as preparing recruits to become warriors and contributing to us versus them mentality. Conti and Doreian (2014) researched the marginalization of recruits that pertained to how recruits were grouped in the academy setting. Conti and Doreian (2014) reported academies tended to be socially engineered, a large cohort existed; however, recruits were placed into smaller peer groups referred to as squads and the squads interacted together throughout their academy time. Although both Rahr and Rice (2015) and Conti and Doreian (2014) focused on the academy setting, neither set of researchers considered the experiences of minority recruits while participating in the academy. Guajardo (2015), Suboch et al. (2017), and Todak et al. (2018) all presented research about the lack of minority role models and mentors in the command staff of police academies and the influence this had on both recruitment and retention of minority officers.

When the former president of the United States determined there was a crisis in policing and established a task force to examine the crisis, and the task force recommended as one of its outcomes the need to establish a concerted effort to recruit and retain minority officers to improve police legitimacy (Rossler et al., 2019); it becomes time to research the motivations of those minority recruits who are in the process to become police officers. It is also a time to examine how relations between police and minority communities deteriorated in such a way that there is a long-standing, well-documented lack of trust between minority communities and police. One way to examine the motivations of minority recruits to become police officers was through a research inquiry using a transcendental phenomenological design. The phenomenological design, as described by Moustakas (1994), allowed for the investigation of human experience.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The need to diversify police agencies has been a concern of research and various

commissions for almost a century. A 2015 report from the U.S. Department of Justice and Civil

Rights Division called for police departments to increase the diversity of their officers (U.S.

Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2015). Wieslander (2019) described the benefits of

increased diversity in police agencies in the following statement, "the diversity is endorsed as a

resource that contributes to improving the organisation, lending legitimacy to the police and its

operations, creating a more attractive work environment, and helping make police work more

efficient" (p. 2). This study seeks to describe the experiences of minority police recruits who are

participating in an entrance-level police academy using a transcendental phenomenological

approach. This study will consist of interviews conducted with minority police recruits

participating in an entrance-level police academy. This section describes the design of the study,

the research questions, the participants, and the setting. Transcendental phenomenological

research procedures are described, and the role of the researcher is explained. Data collection

will be conducted using individual interviews, a questionnaire and document analysis. A review

of data collection procedures and data analysis is provided.

Design

Since 2014, the profession of police officer has been heavily criticized due to the number

of incidents between police officers and minorities that have resulted in deaths, prompting

demonstrations and riots (Adamson, 2016; Delgado & Stefancic, 2016; Nix & Pickett, 2017; Nix

& Wolfe, 2016; Owusu-Bempah, 2016; Wolfe & Nix, 2016). As someone who conducts research

into recruitment and retention of police officers and presents on this topic nationally, I have

followed the outcry in media and social media denouncing the profession of police officer. As I continued to refine my research, I focused on what motivates minorities to become police officers using a qualitative approach.

The differences in the perceptions of gender, race, and ethnicity in police officers, as reported in the research, are similar to Creswell and Poth's (2018) metaphorical description of the qualitative approach to research. The authors used a metaphorical example of an intricate fabric being woven, blending multiple components of thread and colors to create a colorful and vibrant end product. Qualitative research is the method that best provides a voice for the unique experiences of each of the recruits participating in the study, allowing for their descriptions to be combined, culminating in a collective product.

A phenomenological approach was the design approach utilized in this research. Research into the motivations of minorities to become police officers was conducted utilizing a transcendental phenomenological approach as the factors motivating an individual to become a police officer were not clearly understood. Research by Conti and Doreian (2014) and Donahue (2019) described the motivations of individuals to become a police officer as varying for females and minorities; differences stemmed from factors including gender, race, ethnicity, and neighborhood. Suboch et al. (2017) expanded on the research into motivations as they studied reasons why minority officers leave the profession within a few years of being hired.

Conducting a transcendental phenomenological research study allowed the researcher to set aside biases and resulted in the researcher being able to focus on the information presented by the subjects. Transcendental phenomenology lends itself to the researcher being able to return to self to discover how things appear in both nature and essence, thus setting aside biases and focusing on the experiences of the participant (Moustakas, 1994). By setting aside any biases I

have about policing, I obtained a description from police recruits about their experiences while participating in an entrance-level police academy.

Research Questions

One central research question and three sub-questions guided this transcendental phenomenological research study.

Central Research Question

What were the lived experiences of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy?

Sub-Question 1

How did minority police recruits describe their lived experiences to complete the entrance-level police academy and the academy experience?

Sub-Question 2

How did minority police recruits describe the support (or lack of support) they received from family members and friends once they decided to become police officers?

Sub-Question 3

How did minority police recruits describe the recruitment process?

Setting

Maryland has been referred to as "America in miniature" (Global Classroom, 2005) and although it is one of the smallest of the states, the geography and demographics are diverse enough to reflect the country. With over 9,000 square miles of land area, mountains to the west, the Atlantic Ocean to the east, the Chesapeake Bay serving as the divider between the eastern shore and western Maryland, and Washington, D.C. bordering the state, the need for law enforcement officers who can provide diverse services are vast. Multi-jurisdictional police

agencies within the eastern and southern regions of the state have been selected as the sites for which the study will be conducted. The multi-jurisdictional police academies were selected for the size of the recruit classes, access to minority recruits, and the dynamics of the academies as they included representatives from both state, county, and municipal police departments as well as county sheriff's office. The academies were referred to as Academy E and Academy S. Permission to conduct the study was granted by the board of directors for Academy S. Approval to conduct the research was granted by Academy E, and human subjects research approval was obtained from the college where the academy was located.

The academies were similar regarding the population served. Each academy provided training for state, county, and municipal agencies that do not operate their own police academies. Additionally, many sheriff's departments in the state have full police powers in their counties and sheriff's deputies are required to complete the same entrance-level police academy as police recruits.

Each academy was scheduled to last approximately seven months; however, the time for completion was extended due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The academies were commuter academies, meaning that recruits returned home every day. The training was conducted in the classroom, virtually, and in the skills arena. Recruits mastered a pre-determined number of training objectives as established by the POST. The POST was the state body that was established by the Maryland Legislature on October 1, 2016, to govern training and standards for all certified police officers in Maryland (Police Training Act, 2019). The POST succeeded the Police Training Commission that was established in 1966 and abolished in 2016 as the result of House Bill 1016 (Maryland General Assembly, 2016). The selected academies were staffed by training commanders and a combination of civilian and sworn personnel who conducted training,

maintained records, and operated the programs.

The demographics of "Academy E" are described as follows. Academy E provided training for recruits from one of seven counties on the eastern shore of the state. According to the Maryland State Data Center (MSDC) (2015), the total combined population of these counties in 2015 was 353,750. The percentage of the population known to be White, not Hispanic, was 73% and Other was 28%; while the percentage of males was 49% and females was 47% (MSDC, 2015). The projected demographics for 2020 were similar with 70% of the population projected to be White, not Hispanic, and 28% projected to be Other (MSDC, 2015). Additionally, the population was projected to be 49% male and 51% female in 2020 (MSDC, 2015)

The demographics of "Academy S" are described as follows. Academy S provided training for recruits from one of three counties in the southern region of the state. According to the Maryland State Data Center (MSDC) (2015), the total combined population of these counties in 2015 was 362,650. The percentage of the population known to be White, not Hispanic, was 62% and Other was 37%; while the percentage of males was 49% and females was 51% (MSDC, 2015). The projected demographics for 2020 were similar with 66% of the population projected to be White, not Hispanic, and 41% projected to be Other (MSDC, 2015). Additionally, the population was projected to be 49% male and 51% female in 2020 (MSDC, 2015)

Participants

The participants were minority entrance-level police recruits attending the entrance-level police academy. The recruits were selected using purposeful sampling and were between the ages of 21 years-years, representing male and female recruits who were African American (or Black), Hispanic, and Asian. To be certified as a police officer in Maryland, an officer must be 21 years old (COMAR, 2019). Some agencies will hire at 20 years and six months knowing the

recruit will be 21 by the time he graduates from the entrance-level academy. Also, some agencies have a mandatory retirement age for officers, for example, the Maryland Department of State Police accepts applicants who are 20 years six months and mandates retirement at age 60 (MDSP, 2019); therefore, the age range for the study was capped at age 59. The U.S. Department of Justice (2016) reported the demographics of police academies were 15% female, and 30% members of a racial or ethnic minority with 13% identifying as Black, 13% identifying as Hispanic, and 4% identifying as other. Information about the specific demographics of each academy is presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Entrance-Level Police Academy Demographics

Academy E – Demographics	Male	Female
Total Number of Recruits	20	2
Total Number of Minority Recruits	7	2
African American/Black	6	0
Hispanic	0	0
Asian	1	0
Academy S – Demographics	Male	Female
Total Number of Recruits	19	9
Total Number of Minority Recruits	6	9
African American/Black	6	0
Hispanic	0	1
Asian	0	0

The sample size consisted of all minority recruits from the entrance-level academies. Patton (2015) explained purposeful sampling was used as it provided the researcher the opportunity to "permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon in-depth" (p. 52). To conduct purposeful sampling, the training commander of the entrance-level academies provided the demographics of recruits by gender and race. The profession of law enforcement consists of primarily Caucasian males. DataUSA (2019) reported 86.2% of police officers were male and 77.7% of police officers were White in 2017 (Figure 3.1).
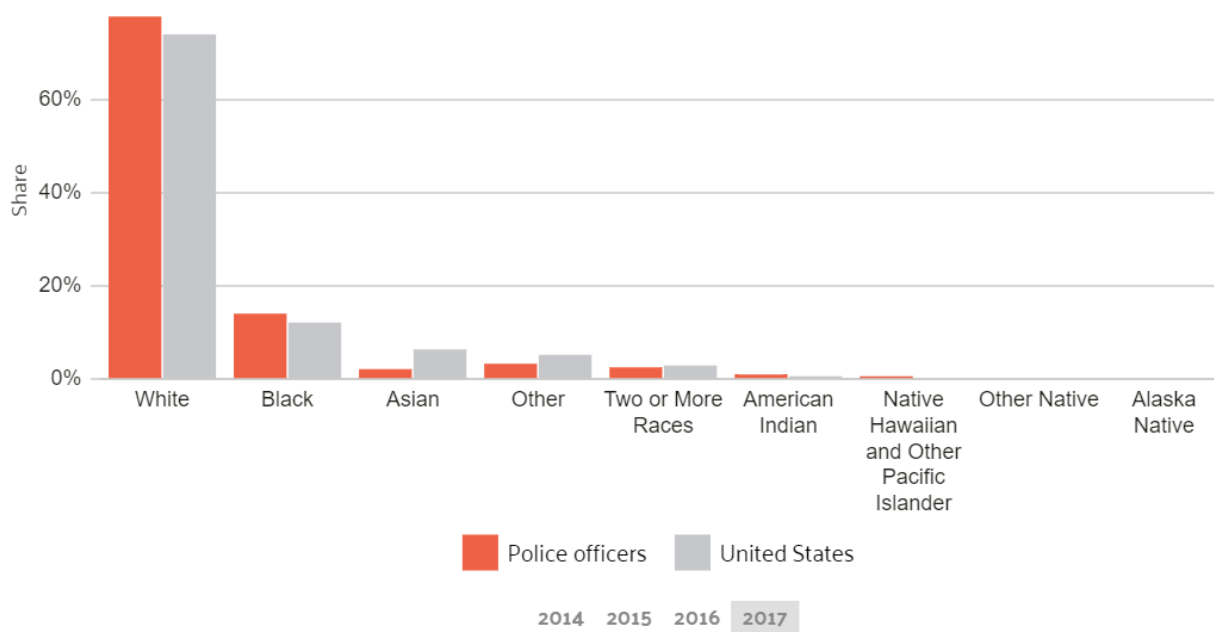

Figure 3.1. Comparison of Race of Police Officers and the General Population of the U.S. Adapted from Data USA. (2020). Police officers. Retrieved from https://datausa.io/profile/soc/333050/

Fusch and Ness (2015) reported: "there is no one-size-fits-all method to reach data saturation" (p. 1409); instead, they described data in terms of being rich and thick. Data triangulation was also recognized by Fusch and Ness (2015) as contributing to the attainment of saturation; this study incorporated multiple external methods of analysis to ensure the validity of

the results to help attain saturation. The sample size was determined by the number of minority recruits in the entrance-level police academy.

The sampling procedure consisted of maximum variation sampling. Maximum variation sampling was selected as this process allowed for a small sample of great diversity and was expected to result in data that was heterogeneous and detailed in uniqueness and diversity (Patton, 2015). The size of the recruits classes was n=22, Academy E, and n=28, Academy S. The degree of the disclosure was selective (Patton, 2015). Recruits were informed that a research study was being conducted while they were participating in the entrance-level academy. The researcher presented information about the study to the class.

The researcher met with the minority recruits in Academy E in person to provide an overview of the study and obtain permission. Recruits completed a sign-up sheet, providing their name, phone, and email. The consent forms were provided during the in-person presentation and reviewed individually before the individual interview being conducted. The researcher met with the minority recruits in Academy S via the Zoom conferencing platform due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Academy staff provided the name, phone, and email of each of the minority recruits who consented during the Zoom conference to allowing their information to be released and allowing the researcher to contact them individually. All interviews were conducted via video conference in the evenings and on weekends when the recruits were not at the academy. The number of recruits who consented to participate was 15, meeting the requirements established by Liberty University.

Donahue (2019) reported larger agencies had the potential to attract a higher percentage of minority recruits. Therefore, I approached county agencies operating entrance-level police academies with the expectation of attaining a participation rate of approximately 25%. The

county agencies declined to participate resulting in the utilization of the municipal academies. The participation rate for Academy E was 100% and the participation rate for Academy S was 83%.

I anticipated a sample size of 15-20 minority recruits as being sufficient to attain saturation given there are four commonly recognized motivators for individuals to become police officers and this number should also have accounted for attrition. These motivators were identified as the challenge of the profession, the ability to serve one's community, the potential impact on one's community, and the job security of the profession (Donahue, 2019; Linos, 2018). The final number of participants resulted in thematic saturation, the number of events that are expected to occur before no new information emerges (Namey, Guest, McKenna, & Chen, 2016).

Procedures

To begin the study, approval was obtained from the Liberty University IRB via an online process. Permission to conduct the study was received from the Board of Directors for Academy S. The Board consisted of three Sheriffs in counties serving southern Maryland. The Sheriffs were advised that the research would not begin without approval from Liberty University's IRB. Initial permission was obtained from Academy E; however, Academy E also required completion of a Human Subjects Research application once provisional IRB approval had been granted by Liberty University. After IRB approval was granted, a meeting was scheduled with the recruit class through the academy directors.

A copy of the interview questions guiding the study and the questionnaire was provided to the Board of Academy S and the Academy Director of Academy E (Appendix A). Entrance-level academy personnel were provided an opportunity to ask questions and address any

concerns they may have. Aside from wanting to know how much time the researcher would need to spend with the class, there were not any additional questions. After informing the academy personnel about the study and its intended purpose, the researcher met with the minority recruits to explain the intent of the research was to examine the motivations of individuals to become police officers. The researcher informed the class she would meet with each recruit individually to discuss their participation. During the initial meeting with all the minority recruits, the researcher explained the voluntary nature of participation.

The initial contact occurred during the academy's hours of operation. After presenting to the entire cohort of minority recruits, the researcher emailed each recruit a date and time to meet individually. The cohorts of minority recruits were small enough to allow the researcher to meet with each minority recruit outside of the academy. The number of minority participants who were interviewed was 15 and encompassed all but two minority recruits. It was anticipated that interviewing 12-15 minority recruits would allow for saturation to be reached as the motivations to become officers are limited (Donahue, 2019). The meetings were conducted via a video chat due to the Covid-19 pandemic and were conducted in the evenings and on weekends when the recruits were not at the academy.

At each meeting, the recruit had been provided with a written overview of the research study and a consent form (Appendix B). This information was attached to the email scheduling the initial meeting. At the scheduled time, the researcher signed on to her computer and accessed the link for the video chat. If a recruit did not sign in within 10 minutes, a text message was sent. All but one recruit responded to the email or text and made themselves available to participate.

One recruit texted that he was not interested in participating when the researcher reached out via text. A second recruit was not able to commit to a time to meet and rescheduled twice

before opting out. During the individual meetings, the research study was explained to the recruits, the informed voluntary nature of participation was stressed and the recruits were informed any decision to refrain from participation would not be shared with any member of the academy staff or the recruit's employing agency.

Once the recruit decided to participate, the consent form was reviewed verbally. All of the Academy E recruits voluntarily signed the consent forms when the researcher presented to the class and turned them in while the researcher was there. Despite already receiving the signed consents, they were reviewed again before the interviews commenced. Academy S was provided a copy of the consent via email. They signed the consent and returned it to the researcher via email, recruits also verbally consented to participate before the interview began.

Once consent was obtained, the interviews were conducted. The location of the interview was virtual due to the Covid-19 pandemic and occurred outside of the academy setting. The interview itself was recorded on a password-protected laptop. Notes were taken by the researcher during the interview and the recruit had the opportunity to ask questions. All participants were assigned a pseudonym to maintain their confidentiality. Interviews were transcribed, emailed to the recruits, and recruits had two weeks from the time the interview was transcribed and emailed to them to review the notes and make any corrections.

The notes were emailed to the recruits using the email address of their choice (personal or professional). The recruits used this opportunity to make any corrections deemed necessary and to provide additional feedback they wanted to be added to the research. They also received the questionnaire at this time and were asked to complete it and return it with any revisions to the transcript. When a transcript and the questionnaire was not returned within one week, a follow-up email was sent. Recruits were advised that if they did not respond to the follow-up email and

phone calls within two weeks of the initial transcript email, the transcript was considered approved.

Immediately following the interview the researcher recorded observations, attitudes, feelings, or concerns in a journal that was stored as notes on the password-protected laptop. Folders were created using the participant's pseudonym. The laptop was secured in a locked office when not being used. When maintained at the researcher's home office, the laptop was password protected.

Summary of Procedures

The following steps were used in the collection of the data. First, the researcher obtained approval from the identified entrance-level police academy command staff. Second, the researcher obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Liberty University. Third, the researcher completed any agency-specific institutional review board approval that was required. Fourth, the researcher met with the academy directors. Fifth, the researcher provided an overview to the recruits in the classroom setting of the entrance-level police academy. One presentation was in person and the other was virtual and the recruits were in the classroom setting. Sixth, the researcher met individually with the recruits to discuss the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of the study, the informed consent documents, and the tools to be used including the interview, questionnaire, and personal essay completed at the time of application. Seventh, the researcher engaged the recruits who wanted to participate and explained the methods for data collection including the recording of interviews, the confidentiality of the recordings, data storage, and security, and the anonymity of the data.

The Researcher's Role

As the sole researcher for this study, I conducted the interviews, completed the document analysis, and analyzed the questionnaire results. Given my professional experience, I needed to set aside any preconceptions I brought to the research. Setting aside my preconceptions is a process Moustakas (1994) described as bracketing. Bracketing consists of allowing the researcher to identify all aspects of the data as existing equally (Patton, 2015). Done effectively, bracketing allows the researcher to (a) identify invariant themes, and (b) present the themes in a textural portrayal (Patton, 2015). As the researcher, I gathered the experiences of each recruit who participated in the study and wove all of their experiences into the final product. According to Patton (2015), the researcher should be able to provide "a description of the experience that doesn't contain the experience" (p. 576).

To conduct the study using a transcendental phenomenological approach requires the researcher to attain *epoché*. Epoché was described as eliminating or gaining clarity about preconceptions (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). Attaining epoché is an important aspect of my role as a researcher in this study. It was important to recognize biases I may have had about the motivations of minority recruits to become police officers and to be able to set these aside. The transcendental phenomenological design allowed me to remain focused on the experiences of the participants by requiring me to set aside any preconceptions I had about their motivations and the experiences they described as having had while participating in the academy.

My background information is as follows. I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and a Master of Community Psychology from Pennsylvania State University. I was employed with the Department of Juvenile Services (Maryland) as an Addictions Counselor, Addictions Program Specialist, and Shift Commander between 1992-1999. I have also worked as a Re-entry

Specialist in an adult detention facility and as a juvenile drug court coordinator (2000–2002). For the past 17 years, I have worked in an administrative capacity with the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS). In this position, I have conducted training, researched and developed training, conducted community outreach, written grants, awarded grants, performed as a legislative liaison, and developed policy. Since December 2019, I have been assigned to the Office of Government and Legislative Affairs for DPSCS. All of my positions have resulted in interaction with law enforcement professionals; however, I have never held the position of a police officer.

In the positions I have held in the field of public safety, I have had an opportunity to work directly with law enforcement professionals, including police officers. I have directly observed the demographics of police agencies throughout Maryland and observed some of Maryland's larger police agencies do not reflect the percentages reported in the research (approximately 70% white males/30% other). I became interested in the motivations of individuals to become police officers. It was this interest that influenced me to pursue my doctoral studies. My professional endeavors have allowed me to develop relationships with academy directors and agency heads that resulted in permission being granted to conduct the study provided approval from Liberty University's IRB. Since December 2019, I have worked in the agency's Office of Government and Legislative Affairs. My office is located away from all police agencies and entrance-level academies. I do not have any interaction with police recruits at any agencies and I am not in a position to exert any influence on the police recruits.

Data Collection

Various data collection methods were employed to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of this study. The three methods that were utilized included interviews,

questionnaires, and document analysis. Initial interviews were conducted with recruits. The

interviews allowed for the phenomenon or essence to be derived (Moustakas, 1994). A

questionnaire was a secondary tool that was used. Document analysis was another secondary

method of data collection that allowed the researcher to gain additional information about the

recruits' backgrounds and reasons for becoming a police officer.

Interviews

The primary means of data collection consisted of transcendental phenomenological

interviews with recruits. The purpose of the interviews was to capture the subjects' lived

experiences while participating in the entrance-level police academy. Individual interviews were

conducted with recruits from municipal police agencies and sheriff's deputies. Moustakas (1994)

stated, "phenomenology is committed to descriptions of experiences, not explanation or

analysis" (p. 58). To ensure consistency, the questions were worded in advance and the same

questions were asked of each subject (Patton, 2015). The questions were framed in a context that

was reflective of the subjects' motivations to participate in the entrance-level police academy.

Therefore, commanders of the selected academy were asked to review the questions for

credibility and validity. Although the focus of the research was on the experiences of the recruits,

the commanders of the academies were able to provide input into the credibility of the questions

as they pertained to the academy setting.

Interviews were conducted individually using Zoom conferencing. The interviews were

conducted after hours and away from the academy in an informal setting to allow for privacy.

The interviews were recorded on a password-protected laptop. The open-ended questions are

listed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Open-ended Interview Questions

Interview Questions	RQ
1. Could you please introduce yourself to me as if you were introducing yourself to the oral review board during the hiring process to become a police officer?	
2. Please describe to me why you currently want to become a police officer?	SQ1
3. Please describe your family members' responses when you told them you wanted to become a police officer.	SQ2
4. Please describe your friends' responses when you told them you wanted to become a police officer.	SQ2
5. Please describe your experiences with recruitment once you decided to apply to become a police officer.	SQ1
6. Please describe your motivation(s) to become a police officer.	SQ1
7. Please describe your expectations of the entrance-level police academy before you began and if your expectations were influenced by family members or friends.	SQ2
8. Please describe how your motivation to become a police officer has changed since beginning the entrance-level police academy.	SQ1
9. Please describe the peer support you experience in the academy.	SQ3
10. Please describe any impact you believe being a recruit in a police academy has had on you.	CRQ
11. Please describe any pre-conceived ideas you held about police that you believe you brought to the academy.	SQ2

12. Please describe how the preconceived ideas in the previous question have changed, stayed the same, or new ones that have developed.	SQ3
13. Please describe how the structure of the academy (assignment of squads, residential/commuter, downtime, classroom, practical training) has impacted your experience in the academy.	SQ3
14. Please describe how you and your peers have supported each other through the academy.	SQ2
15. Please describe any challenges you may have experienced while in the academy.	SQ3
16. Please describe your motivation to overcome any challenges you experienced while in the academy.	SQ3
17. Please explain if your perceptions about being a police officer have changed from the onset of the academy through today.	SQ1
18. Please describe your views about the factors that influenced your decision to become a police officer and whether they have changed since you entered the academy.	CRQ

The interview questions were submitted to 54 police training directors in Maryland. The questions were reviewed for content and applicability to the academy setting. Approximately 18% of the directors contacted responded to the request for review, affirming the validity of the content and application to the setting.

The selection standards to become a police officer were consistent for every police agency in Maryland. One of the selection standards required the candidates to participate in an oral interview as part of the hiring process (COMAR, 2019). Some of the interviews were

conducted individually and others consisted of an oral board process. The researcher selected this opening question to frame the research questions. The second question allowed the recruits to describe their motivation to become police officers.

The process of becoming a police officer was often long. In Maryland, every successful applicant completed an initial screening process to include a fitness assessment, a written examination, and an oral interview (MDSP, 2019.; Baltimore County Police Department, 2019). The next step in the process required the completion of a polygraph and background investigation (MDSP, 2019). In Maryland, the selection standards included having reached the age of 21 years by the time of graduation from the entrance-level academy, possession of a high school diploma or General Equivalency Degree (GED), citizenship or be an honorably discharged veteran who is in the process of applying for citizenship, eligibility to possess and use a handgun under federal law, and successfully pass a background investigation and criminal history records check (COMAR, 2019). Following a conditional offer of employment, the applicant must also complete a physical and a mental health evaluation (COMAR, 2019). Question five was intended to allow the recruits to describe the process of their individual recruitment experiences. Linos et al. (2017) and Linos and Riesch (2020) described the subjectivity of the recruitment process. The recruitment process was individual for each applicant. According to Moustakas (1994), using broad questions was expected to facilitate "rich, vital, and substantive descriptions" (p. 116).

Questions three and four recognized that recruits had time during which to consider their decision to become a police officer and these questions sought to examine the motivations of the recruits in relationship to the support (or lack of support) received. Donahue (2019) researched the reasons individuals applied to become police officers. Aiello (2019) reported the influence of

family and friends on an individual's decision to become police officers. Question 11 was designed to determine if recruits describe any other external influences that may have influenced their continued motivation to become police officers. Delgado and Stefancic (2016) highlighted to concerns of community members for their minority youth during encounters with police officers.

In addition to the support of family members and friends, attitudes about police officers have been impacted since 2014 by the negative portrayals of police in the media and on social media. Madison (2015), Pyrooz et al. (2016), and Wolfe and Nix (2016) have all exacerbated the media for reporting inaccurate information about police-involved deaths. Participants provided a better understanding of their motivations to become officers and the influence of family and friends on this decision. Questions 6, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 were designed to obtain descriptions of recruits' coping mechanisms which may have been influenced by internal factors in the entrance-level academy to include the structure of the academy and peer support and/or external factors such as the support of friends and family members. Pardee (1990) addressed the value of understanding how individuals cope within different environments.

The central research question was focused on how recruits described their academy experience. Questions 9, 11, 12, and 18 sought to obtain an understanding of the recruits' experiences in the entrance-level academy concerning biases or preconceived notions about the academy and profession. Meier, Arentsen, Pannell, and Putman (2018) reported performance during academy training had been correlated with future success as a police officer. The intent of the research was on gaining an improved understanding of the motivations of police recruits to become police officers while participating in the entrance-level academy.

Questionnaire

Recruits were asked to complete a qualitative questionnaire within two weeks of the

initial interview. Patton (2015) described the questionnaire as a photograph, capturing a moment

in time, and contrasted this with an interview which he described as being more like a

documentary film, fluid, and changing, which is what he likens the interview to. The

questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions that complemented the interview questions.

Both the interview questions and questionnaire were piloted with three police recruits from two

different entrance-level academies in Maryland. Additionally, the interview questions and

questionnaire were sent to 54 police training directors in Maryland. The response rate was

approximately 18% with positive approval of the questions. Following the interview, the recruit

was informed that a follow-up email would be sent. The email included the transcribed notes

from the interview and three follow-up questions. The researcher explained that individuals

sometimes think of additional information they would have liked to provide once an interview

was concluded and the follow-up questionnaire provided this opportunity. The questionnaire

questions are listed in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Follow-up Questions

Follow-up Questions
1. Reflecting on the questions I have already asked you, please describe anything else you would like to express about what motivated you to become a police officer?
2. Think about the individual who has been an important influence on you, please describe how they reacted and what they said to you (or how they might react and what they might say to you) when they found out you had applied to and been accepted into the police academy.

3. Please describe the contribution(s) you believe you will make to the community you serve as

a patrol officer once you have graduated from the academy.

The follow-up questions were intended to assist with qualifying the data from the

recruits' responses to the interview questions. The first follow-up question was intended to be a

prompt for the recruits to add information that, in hindsight, they wished they had shared during

the initial interview. The second question re-examined the recruits' support (or lack of) support.

It delved deeper than the interview questions about support and asked the recruits to focus

specifically on the individual who may have motivated or otherwise influenced them to become a

police officer. Finally, the third question was intended to obtain information that built on the

hierarchy of needs. The recruit, at this stage, had sufficient experience in the entrance-level

academy to move beyond having basic needs met. The recruit may have been considering the

current circumstances of police protests and calls to defund the police and may have been

thinking about the contribution she would make to the community following graduation or she

may have been completely re-evaluating her career choice.

Taking the time to complete similar questions resulted in additional information being

included in the research. The analysis of the data consisted of triangulating data using qualitative

sources (Patton, 2015). Combining the analysis of the interviews with qualitative questionnaires

contributed to the validation of the data.

The procedure for having the recruit complete the questionnaire was to ask the recruit to

complete a brief questionnaire when they received the transcript of the interview. The

questionnaire was intended to capture additional information the recruit may have thought to

provide but did not provide during the interview. The questionnaire was sent to the recruit as an email during the member check process of the data collection.

Before engaging in the research process, the interview questions and questionnaire were piloted with entrance-level recruits who were currently participating in an entrance-level police academy. The results of the pilot study were not included in the research as the participation was solely to vet the interview questions and questionnaire. A peer review was also conducted as the interview questions and questionnaires were distributed to those individuals who are considered police training directors in Maryland. A total of 54 training directors were sent copies of the interview questions and questionnaires for review. Approximately 18% of the training directors concurred with the questions or made suggestions for modifications based on their perspective. A few saw the questions as being valuable for recruitment and made suggestions from the recruitment perspective.

Document Analysis

Document analysis is a component of data collection in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Applicants to police academies are required to complete a personal history statement during the application process. Patton (2015) described the mountains of records produced by organizations; the target agencies are no exception. The statement is the recruit's story in that it provides background information about their family, education, hobbies and interest, and reasons for wanting to become a police officer. Specifically, recruits were required to write a personal essay about why they want to work for the employing agency. The researcher was provided a copy of the essay by the recruits and it allowed the researcher to further validate the data collected from both the interviews and the questionnaires.

The essay asked the recruit to complete a minimum 200-word statement stating why they wanted to work for the employing agency and why the agency should hire them over other applicants. Further instructions directed the applicant to "Write about your abilities and strengths. Write about events in your life that have helped to shape you" (Prince George's County, 2010). In its context, the essay provided nominal insight into the applicant and being able to review it as an individual document allowed for a comparison to the responses recruits provided during the interviews and on the questionnaires.

The use of the applicant's essay contributed to the analytic procedure and allowed the research to make sense of and synthesize the data in the essay (Bowen, 2009). The research sought to describe, in the recruits' words, their motivations to become police officers while participating in an entrance-level police academy. The essay was the statement, drafted by the recruit, stating in his own words his motivations for becoming a police officer with the employing agency. Being able to review and analyze the essay helped corroborate findings from the interviews and questionnaires. As Bowen (2009) stated, examining data collected from different sources corroborated findings and reduced the potential for bias. Bowen (2009) identified several factors that document analysis can contribute to qualitative research including providing data on the context of the research, supplementing the research data, provide a means for tracking changes, and verify findings and corroborate evidence. These factors were relevant to the research conducted in this study and document analysis provided context about the subject, supplemented the research data gathered from the interviews, demonstrated changes the participant may have experienced from initial application to time of the interview, and corroborated and validated the research.

IRB approval process

Liberty University required IRB approval before the onset of any research being conducted. The purpose of the IRB was to "ensure the privacy, confidentiality, and safety of participants" (Liberty University, 2020). A pilot test of the interview questions and the questionnaire was conducted with three recruits from two entrance-level police academies in Maryland. Aside from vetting the questions, there were no attempts to collect data for this study until IRB approval had been obtained.

Approval from Entrance-Level Police Academy Personnel

The researcher emailed the agency head of each identified police academy to introduce herself, briefly explain the research proposal, and request permission to discuss the potential research with the academy recruits. The researcher also offered to speak with the entrance-level policy academy command staff. The interview questions and questionnaires were provided, and input was accepted from the agency head and academy personnel. The researcher explained that the results would be confidential, and pseudonyms would be used. The pseudonyms would be assigned using the names of minority characters from popular police shows from the 1970s through the current year. The use of pseudonyms contributed to the confidentiality of the study.

Presentation to the Recruit Class

Entrance-level police recruits receive instruction in a classroom setting and the researcher made a presentation to the minority recruits in each recruit class explaining her status as a doctoral student, the research subject, and the process of meeting with each recruit individually to further explain their role in the research. The presentation was done in the presence of the academy instructors if they opted to remain in the classroom. The voluntary and confidential nature of the research was mentioned during the presentation and it was explained this would be

further discussed in the individual meeting. The researcher met with the recruits at Academy E in person and with the recruits at Academy S virtually, utilizing video conferencing.

Individual Meetings with Recruits

The researcher met privately with each recruit following the classroom presentation using video conferencing. During this meeting, the researcher answered any questions the recruits had, described the confidential nature of the research, and reviewed the informed consent form. Once a recruit agreed to participate, the informed consent form was verbally reviewed with the recruit. Participants from Academy E had voluntarily signed the consent form in advance and provided it to the researcher while she was at the academy. The consent form was verbally reviewed by the researcher and the recruit before any interviews commenced. The process of interview, questionnaire, and follow-up email and/or phone call was also explained.

Engagement of Recruits

Once a recruit agreed to participate, the interview was conducted after-hours, via a video conference, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A copy of the questions was provided at the onset of the interview, with the recruit's consent the interview was recorded on a laptop, and the recruit was informed notes would be taken. Upon completion of the interview, the interview was transcribed and emailed to the recruit along with the questionnaire. All records (electronic and written) were maintained by the researcher. The laptop was password protected when not in use and all documents were maintained securely by the researcher at her home office.

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Data Analysis

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The purpose of the phenomenological analysis was described by Patton (2015) as seeking to "grasp and elucidate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or group of people" (p. 573). Schwandt (2007) defines data as

"recorded observations" (p. 61). These observations may be textural or numerical and structured or unstructured (Schwandt, 2007). For this study, the data to be analyzed was that of entrance-level police recruits describing their motivations to become police officers while participating in an entrance-level police academy. To effectively analyze the data, the researcher must suspend all judgments about the phenomenon, a practice that can be done using epoché and bracketing (Moustakas, 1994). The practices of epoché and bracketing are done by setting aside what the researcher knows (or perceives they know) about the phenomenon being researched, remaining in the moment (Moustakas, 1994). Epoché is a method of reflection, allowing the researcher to consider the biases she may bring to the research; whereas bracketing is a process that allows the researcher to isolate key concepts that emerge during the interview, bracketing them out is one of the first steps in phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994).

The next step in conducting the data analysis was the transcription of the text. In his modification of the van Kaam method of analysis, Moustakas (1994) presented the process of individualized textural-structural descriptions; a process allowing the researcher to "develop a *Composite Description* of the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole" (p. 121). Moustakas (1994) provided seven steps for the researcher to achieve individualized textural-structural descriptions including (a) listing and preliminary grouping, (b) reduction and elimination, (c) clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents, (d) final identification of the invariant constituent and themes and then conducting for each researcher an individual textural description, individual structural description, and for each research participant an individual textural-structural description. These steps were conducted by recording the interviews with the recruits' consent and taking notes throughout the interview process.

Listing and Preliminary Grouping

The interviews were transcribed manually by the researcher, with the initial results being preliminarily grouped. This process began with consent to record the interview being obtained and note-taking that was done during the interview process, and in later steps transcribing the recordings and comparing the transcription with notes. Patton (2015) recommended noting emerging patterns and themes while conducting the field interview.

For this study, the researcher transcribed the recorded interviews by preparing a text version of the recorded interview (Schwandt, 2007). The written text was compared with the notes taken during the interview and groups were created. The groups were aligned with the central and supplemental research questions. Once the groups were established, the researcher reviewed the questionnaire and conducted document analysis of the essays submitted during the application process for inclusion in the groupings.

As the researcher, I engaged in the process of coding. Coding, as described by Schwandt (2007), applies to the three methods of data collection used in the research–interview, questionnaire, and document analysis. Coding allowed for the data to be broken down into manageable segments that were then named or otherwise identified (Schwandt, 2007). The type of coding was a posteriori as this allowed for codes to be generated based on actual language and provided the ability to work between the data segments and the codes (Schwandt, 2007).

Reduction and Elimination

The process of reduction and elimination then occurred. Patton (2015) recommended the researcher "restate the purpose of your enquiry, and therefore the purpose of your analysis" (p. 523). The researcher had a print-out of the central and supplemental research questions displayed in front of her throughout the analysis process. This process allowed the researcher to determine

if a moment of the experience was necessary or if there was sufficient information to understand

it and determine if the moment could be extracted and labeled (Moustakas, 1994).

Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents

After the labels were developed, clusters were examined and thematization (the process

of developing themes) of the unchanging constituents began (Moustakas, 1994). Schwandt

(2007) described the thematic analysis as an exploratory approach during which the analyst

notates sections of text according to how they contribute to emerging themes. The results from

the interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis were compared against the research

questions and sub-questions to identify and refine codes and themes. Upon determining that the

data had been reduced in a manner that encapsulated the research, the process of clustering the

information into the core themes of the experience was done. (Moustakas, 1994). Themes were

established as a result of this process (Moustakas, 1994).

Initial themes that were derived from the research questions included motivation, family

support, peer-support, family and peer influence, pre-conceived ideas about police, the academy

experience. The preceding list was based on the interview questions and questionnaire. Upon

transcribing the interviews, the transcripts, questionnaire answers, and results of the document

review were be coded and the codes included family, peers, support, motivation, and experience.

Using the process of analytic induction as described by (Schwandt, 2007), the data that resulted

from the interviews, questionnaire, and document analysis were compared to the themes to

determine if the phenomenon fits.

Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents

The next step was to determine a final identification of the invariant themes by cross-

checking them with the data (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) described this process as

comparing the invariant constituents and their themes against the complete transcribed record.

Moustakas (1994) provided three guiding questions for validation:

1. Are the invariant constituents and their accompanying themes expressed explicitly in the complete transcription?

2. Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed?

3. If they are not explicit or compatible, they are not relevant and should be deleted.

Individual Textualized Descriptions

Patton (2015) described the qualitative analysis as being driven by an ability to recognize patterns and being open to the data. Having had the opportunity to compare interviews with interview results, questionnaires, and document analysis, the researcher brings together the patterns that emerged, giving voice to the similarities and differences. The descriptions may capture differences and the analysis consists of the researcher attempting to understand the differences (Patton, 2015).

Validation consisted of multiple steps. The first was the triangulation of the data; triangulation allowed the researcher to test for consistency among the various data sources (Patton, 2015). Using the methods of interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis allowed for a comparison of what people say publicly with what they say privately (Patton, 2015). Triangulation had the potential to result in data that was contradictory. Patton (2015) indicated this phenomenon may be related to the researcher identifying different perspectives at different times instead of determining the data is invalid.

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Trustworthiness

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Trustworthiness was an essential component of all research. Trustworthiness was relayed to participants by providing a clear description, supporting documents, IRB approval, agency

approval, and consent forms. Regarding the trustworthiness of the data, qualitative, phenomenological research benefits from triangulation. Patton (2015) explained "combinations of interviewing, observation, and document analysis are expected in most fieldwork" (p. 661). Engaging in the process of memoing during interviews, the researcher can compare observations with interviews (Patton, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Asking for additional information through writing prompts and comparing it against interviews, document analysis, and qualitative questionnaires adds to the trustworthiness of the study.

Member checks were completed by the recruits. The member checks consisted of sending each recruit a transcribed copy of their interview and providing an opportunity for the recruit to review the textualized interview and provide feedback. Recruits received the questionnaire at the same time they received the transcribed interview.

Before engaging in the research process, the interview questions and questionnaire were piloted with entrance-level recruits who were currently participating in an entrance-level police academy. The results of the pilot study were not included in the research as the participation was solely to vet the interview questions and questionnaire. A peer review was also conducted as the interview questions and questionnaires were distributed to those individuals who are considered police training directors in Maryland. A total of 54 training directors were sent copies of the interview questions and questionnaires for review. 13% of the training directors concurred with the questions or made suggestions for modifications based on their perspective. A few saw the questions as being valuable for recruitment and made suggestions from the recruitment perspective.

Credibility

The processes of recorded and transcribed interviews, member-checking, document analysis, and collecting artifacts are all aspects of transcendental phenomenological research that have been validated and expounded upon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Recognizing that qualitative research was about the richness of the materials presented, the research was conducted in a manner designed to elicit the richest amount of information available during the interview process. The interviews were conducted off-site and after-hours where the staff of the academies did not have access to the participants, confidentiality was maintained, and responses were kept secure. Two distinct methods were used to record the data, interviews and memoing (Patton, 2015). As described by Patton (2015), triangulation was utilized as the means to analyze the data. Transcripts were reviewed twice by the researcher, submitted to each recruit for review and comment (member-checking), and reviewed again when the period of review and comment had ended. The initial review was for content and the secondary review for clarity. Patton (2015) described the process of allowing participants to review and provide feedback on their transcribed interviews as a review by inquiry participants; citing the value this process had in triangulation.

Dependability and Confirmability

To ensure dependability the researcher was prepared to spend sufficient time with each subject to ensure they were comfortable with their agreement to participate in the study. If subjects wanted to take time to think about their participation before engaging in the study, they were allotted at least one business day to make this decision. Patton (2015) referred to this as trustworthiness. The researcher intended to establish credibility, dependability, and

transferability. Also, the use of bracketing throughout the interview process assisted with

maintaining detailed notes that were specific to the research.

Transferability

Patton (2015) explained transferability as being able to generalize terms in a case-to-case

transfer. As stated previously, although Maryland is small, with its designation as "America in

miniature" (Global Classroom, 2005), the results were expected to be transferable to police

agencies across the U.S. Obtaining saturation in the research was expected to result in thick, rich

data that included variation and depth, and could provide a detailed understanding and

adequately represent the phenomenon (Morse, 2015).

Transferability was anticipated in the result. Other states have POST agencies that set

standards for their academies. It was anticipated that the focus of the research process in

Maryland could be expanded to other academies in the state as well as other states; especially as

saturation was attained. Reaching saturation, the descriptions collected in this research were

reflective of the experiences of minority recruits throughout the U.S. who participate in similar

entrance-level academies. Saturation was described by Patton (2015) as "analyzing patterns as

fieldwork proceeds and continuing to add to the sample until nothing new is being learned" (p.

271).

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Ethical Considerations

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Ethical considerations as identified in Creswell and Poth (2018) included the use of the

IRB, consent forms, and the confidentiality of records. The research was not conducted without

prior IRB approval. Although the researcher had identified the entrance-level programs that were

the locations for the research, no participants were contacted until IRB approval was granted.

The primary ethical consideration for this research, and all research with police recruits, concerns the setting of the entrance-level academy. As reported by Rahr and Rice (2015), academies are often paramilitary in nature. The focus of the study was on the motivations of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy. Providing an overview of the study in advance, with the academy command staff and instructors addressed concerns the academy staff had and resulted in decreased pressure on recruits.

Recruits disclosed they were not pressured into participating. Staff was not present in the classroom when the researcher presented to the recruits. Interviews were conducted off-site and recruits were assured staff would not be told if they participated. Additionally, pseudonyms were used. Since the interviews were conducted off-site and after hours, the instructors did not know who was interviewed and who was not, unless the recruit disclosed this information.

Consent forms were essential to ensure the recruit understood the voluntary nature of the research. Rahr and Rice (2015) have described the paramilitary style of entrance-level police academies. It was essential to have a well-constructed consent form to inform the recruit of the voluntary nature of participation.

The other concern was the confidentiality of the participant information. All written records were stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office that was maintained at her home. Interviews will be recorded on the researcher's password-protected laptop. Pseudonyms were used for each recruit who participated in the study. The pseudonyms were names of police officers from popular television shows in the 1960s – 2019. Once the interviews were conducted and transcribed, the researcher retained the recordings until approval of the dissertation. Upon approval of the dissertation, the recordings will be destroyed. The transcripts will be maintained electronically for three years from the date the dissertation is approved. After three years, the

transcripts will be destroyed. Any paper files affiliated with the data will be scanned to a secure device and maintained for three years as well.

Summary

This chapter described the method of data collection and analysis that were used in this transcendental phenomenological research to gain insight into the motivations of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy. To develop a better understanding of police training, it was essential to understand the motivations of police recruits, especially minority recruits, who were participating in entrance-level academies. This chapter described the data collection using interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis, as well as describing how the data was collected. The chapter also provided an overview of how the data was analyzed to present the findings in a credible and trustworthy manner.

To conduct the research IRB approval was obtained from Liberty University, entrance-level police academies were identified based on demographic similarities, and approval was obtained from the agency head and any other individuals identified by the chief. All minority recruits in the academies were invited to participate.

To conduct the research, the researcher met with the minority recruits in each academy and then individually with each recruit who volunteered to participate. The process for conducting the research was explained and those recruits who consented to participate completed the process. The tools for data collection consisted of individual interviews, the completion of a written questionnaire by participants, and a review of essay documents. Minority recruits in two entrance-level police academies participated in the research and a total of 15 recruits were interviewed, resulting in data saturation. Pseudonyms were assigned to recruits, based on minority characters from police shows from the 1970s through the current date, to protect

confidentiality. Recruits who agreed to participate completed an informed consent document. The informed consent stressed that participation was voluntary and confidential.

Triangulation was utilized to validate and corroborate the data. This consisted of the use of individual interviews with pre-determined structured questions, completion of a questionnaire, and document review. The analysis was conducted by listing and preliminarily grouping results, reduction and elimination, clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents, final identification of the invariant constituents, and individual textualized descriptions.

The next chapter presents the results of the data analysis. Using pseudonyms allowed the participants to share their motivations for becoming police officers by describing their lived experiences as minority recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy anonymously. They also described their lived experiences as they complete the entrance-level police academy, the support (or lack of support) they received from family members and friends, as well as their experiences recruitment process.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the data analysis stemming from the phenomenological research conducted with entrance-level police recruits attending one of two identified police academies in Maryland. An overview of the participants, as well as a description of the themes that were identified, are included. This chapter presents the results of the individual interviews, responses to a written questionnaire, and analysis of goals identified by the recruits via a written personal goal statement.

Participants

The participants in this phenomenological research study consisted of minority recruits participating in one of two entrance-level police academies being conducted in Maryland. Participants were selected based on their self-identification of being minorities as defined in Chapter 1. A description of each participant, including their demographics, is provided in Table 4.1. Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, all interviews were completed via Zoom video conferencing.

Table 4.1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	College	Military
Barnes	22	F	Caucasian	Yes	No
Bates	22	F	Caucasian	Yes	No
Earl	22	M	Black	No	Yes
Hawk	28	M	Asian & Indian	Yes	No
Hopps	22	F	Caucasian	Yes	No

Jones	30	M	Black	Unknown	Yes
Kono	24	F	Caucasian	Yes	No
Lacey	23	F	Caucasian	Yes	No
Lily	26	F	Caucasian	Yes	No
Pepper	23	F	Caucasian	Yes	No
Prentiss	21	F	Caucasian	Yes	No
Robinson	22	M	Black	Yes	No
Sykes	31	F	Caucasian & Hispanic	Unknown	Unknown
TC	22	M	Caucasian & Black	Unknown	No
Wells	23	F	Caucasian	Unknown	No

Barnes

Barnes was a 22-year-old, Caucasian female who stated during the interview that she had held an 8-5 job for four years and she wanted to do something different. She enrolled in community college and took a criminal justice class. As part of the class, she had to complete a ride-along. Barnes knew she wanted to become a police officer following the ride-along and waited until she was 21 to apply to her current employer. According to her personal goal statement, she was from the county where her employer is located and she knew she wanted to work in her home community. "I wanted to gain experience as a police officer at a place where I know my way around."

Bates

Bates was a 22-year-old, Caucasian female who stated during the interview that her

grandfather had been a police officer and she looked up to him. She also had an uncle in law enforcement and an aunt who had wanted to be a police officer but did not pursue it. Bates worked as a seasonal officer in a resort town, bringing some familiarity about policing to the academy. She was hired by the agency that she had worked for as a seasonal officer. She described her motivation to become a police officer as liking "the aspect of helping people and being able to make a change."

Earl

Earl was a 22-year-old, Black male who is not native to the state in which he was hired. He had been a star athlete in high school playing football, basketball, and baseball. After graduating high school he joined the military. He decided to become a police officer upon completing his obligation to the military. He stated his applications were rejected because of the neighborhood he was raised in and continues to live in. "I applied to several agencies and was turned down repeatedly because of the neighborhood I am from and my family's reputation." He attributed his knowledge of the rejections as coming from police recruiters he knew. "I know this because I am friends with the recruiters at the agencies I applied to, and I would advance in the application process to the background check, and right after the background check, I would get the letter that I was not accepted. The recruiters told me afterward that I was not accepted because of where I am from."

Earl described growing up in a rough neighborhood and knowing family members were involved with drugs. Earl is one of six boys, the second oldest, raised by their grandmother. "I grew up in a rough neighborhood and there is a generational history of drug trafficking and use in my family." After the military, he decided he wanted to come home and be a role-model for youth in his neighborhood. "I coached football after high school and I knew I wanted to show the

youth there were options other than drugs and what they saw in the neighborhood." Earl stated

his belief that his decision to become a police officer has had a positive impact on three of his

younger brothers, "we have 3 younger brothers and they have seen my decision to become a

police officer, they are seeing they have different options."

Hawk

Hawk was a 28-year-old Indian and Asian male who moved to the United States when he

was six years old and grew up in Maryland. Hawk completed college and managed a nightclub

but always knew he wanted to be a police officer. Hawk found himself at a crossroads knowing

he could manage a nightclub with limited opportunities to advance or become a police officer

where every day would not be the same. "Fork in the road, manage a nightclub and not get

anywhere or I could have a job where every day is not the same." Hawk views the profession of

a police officer as a helping profession. He described being a police officer as the opportunity to

"Help others, especially as a minority and to be able to say – hey I'm one of you."

Hopps

Hopps was a 22-year-old, Caucasian female who wanted to work for a police agency,

other than the one that hired her. Hopps' motivation to work for the other agency was that it

allowed her to combine a love for two different things, an opportunity that did not exist with her

current employer. That changed when she did a one-month internship with her current employer

that became a 500+ hour internship. Hopps' described her employing agency as "They made me

part of the family even though I wasn't an officer or even an actual employee, they treated me

like it." Hopps' father wanted to be a police officer but her mother told him she would not marry

him if he became a police officer. He had been in a fraternity in college and many of his

fraternity brothers entered law enforcement. Hopps' described the support she has received from

her "fraternity uncles" as being important. The family theme continued throughout her interview and personal goal statement as she described the importance of family. When describing her motivation to become a police officer Hopps' stated, "I guess it goes back to the whole family mentality from my internship. They did a lot to support me and be amazing role models. Everyone needs role models in their life."

Jones

Jones was a 30-year-old Black male who knew he wanted to be a police officer after high school but struggled to get hired when he first began to apply. Jones did not indicate if he attended college but he did state that his godfather suggested he might need to obtain additional life experience to be hired. "I made the decision to do the National Guard and I talked to a lot of people and my godfather said it was a competition to get the job because I was going against people who had experience and military." Jones came from a line of law enforcement and public safety professionals his mom was a probation officer and his uncle worked in federal law enforcement. He views himself as following in their footsteps. Although he did not state it outright, Jones' alluded to having long hair at the start of his application period, before enlisting in the military, and that his hair had a negative impact on his application process. "Applied to a bunch of agencies and at the time, I had long hair, so in one process I got all the way to the background phase and I was not selected." Jones also described his motivation as increasing each time he was told "no." He described applying to his current employer and learning about a dual opportunity where he could apply to be a law enforcement officer or a correctional officer and would proceed based on availability. He was hired as a correctional officer and asked regularly when he could become a police officer. From the time he decided to enter the

corrections academy and work as a correctional officer, it took two years to get accepted to the police academy.

Kono

Kono was a 24-year-old, Caucasian female who is from another state. In addition, Kono did not enter the academy with the goal of being a long-term officer for her employing agency. Kono described being motivated to work for a federal agency when she initially began considering a career as a law enforcement officer. "If you had asked me before [the academy] I would have told you I want to get my foot in the door and go federal." The experience of the academy has encouraged an existing love of learning. Kono was pursuing her master's degree and considering a second master's degree or pursuing a doctoral degree. Specifically, Kono stated, "My ideals have really changed about why I want to become a police officer but throughout the academy, it's really been tested." Throughout the interview, Kono seemed to be formulating where she was heading next. Although Kono was pondering her future, she was committed to doing something to help people. When asked about her motivation to become a police officer during the interview, her response was "I want to be able to help people. I know that is such a common answer but it is the right answer for me."

Lacey

Lacey was a 23-year-old, Caucasian female, who was from another state and grew up wanting to pursue a career in a different field. When she got to college, she discovered science was not for her. Discussing the pursuit of her first career choice she stated she "very quickly learned science and all of that is not for me." She spoke with an uncle who worked in federal law enforcement, began taking some criminal justice classes, transferred to a criminal justice degree program, and obtained employment as a seasonal law enforcement officer. She found that

pursuing a position as a police officer would allow her to be active. When describing her motivation to become a police officer, she stated she believed she would like to be able "to do a job where I am not sitting behind a desk and I can deal with situations that most people wouldn't want to do, go hands-on, running after."

Lily

Lily was a 26-year-old, Caucasian female, with a background in mental health. Lily had both a bachelor's and master's degree in the social sciences fields. Lily began to consider a career in law enforcement following an assault in college. Lily described the responding officer as being supportive and encouraging throughout the entire process, including court. "The officer was very-supportive and told me to not to let him [the judge] get under my skin. I want to be that light for someone else and help them, even on their worst day and even if I have to arrest them." Lily did pursue a career in mental health that had her working closely with law enforcement. This experience also influenced her decision to apply to the police academy. She viewed police work as working a shift and then being able to come home. While working in mental health, her workday would end, she would come home, and her clients would still call her. She viewed being a police officer as less stressful and reported that "It will be nice to be the one to be called… I will work 12-hour shifts but when the day is done, it's done."

Pepper

Pepper was a 23-year-old, Caucasian female, who has wanted to be a police officer since at least middle school. She moved to Maryland from another state and was the first member of her family who entered law enforcement, although her brother followed her footsteps and was a police officer in her home state. Pepper described her motivation to become a police officer as

providing the opportunity "To serve and protect the community that I live in. Make it a better world and give back to the community."

Prentis

Prentis was a 21-year-old, Caucasian female, who had always wanted to pursue a career in law enforcement. "I know it's a cheesy answer but I love that I respond to calls for duty. I know law enforcement is never the same day. I know that I will see people at their best and their worst and I love that you're always there to help them." Prentis earned an associate's in criminal justice having received both scholastic and athletic scholarships. In her personal goal statement, Prentiss described the opportunity to become an officer with her employing agency as changing her life for the better and allowing her to pursue the career of her dreams.

Robinson

Robinson was a 22-year-old, Black male, with a Bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a minor in psychology. He was the youngest of three and described growing up poor in an urban area of Maryland. His mother raised him and his siblings and his father was incarcerated. His mother had wanted to go to college to study forensic science but was not able to do so as she worked three jobs to support the family. Robinson described watching crime shows with his mom while growing up and believed her interests inspired his desire to be an officer. Sports was his way out and he was able to attend college. He worked as a seasonal police officer and described the experience as broadening his horizon. Robinson shared how he and his mother were the only ones in his family without a criminal record. He also described the allure of the drug trade to a young man who sometimes did not have food or electricity. When describing his motivation to become an officer he stated, "My other motivation is the belief people have that "we don't have options." Robinson described wanting to show people they do have options.

Sykes

Sykes was a 31-year-old, Caucasian and Hispanic female. She described wanting to become a police officer because "I really want to help people." Before being hired by her employing agency, she worked in customer service for 8.5 years. When considering which agencies to apply to, she only applied to her current employer. Sykes decided it was important to her to work in her community stating, "I knew the people in the county and I wanted to stay here."

TC

TC was a 22-year-old male of mixed ethnicity, Black and Caucasian. Additionally, TC disclosed a learning disability that caused him to struggle in elementary and high school. He was raised by a single mother although his father was in his life. In 8th grade, he was only reading at a 3rd-grade level and although he was good at home he acted out in school. "One of the things that changed was my father telling me that if I kept it up [acting out in school] I would not amount to anything; I would not be positive in society. I knew I wanted to get in law enforcement of some kind and I felt it was my destiny to serve and protect." TC reported having support from his parents, church, and the school resource officer. He began to read everything and improved to a 10th-grade reading level by 11th grade. He graduated early, took night courses, played sports, and became a seasonal officer. He was hired by his employing agency and described his motivation to become a police officer as stemming from the belief "…we need people out there to protect and serve, we really do."

Wells

Wells was a 23-year-old, married, Caucasian, female who had wanted to be a police officer for a very-long time. Before being hired as a police recruit, she was a waitress. While in

high school, Wells wondered what it was that police officers do and her father encouraged her to go on a ride-along with the local sheriff's office. Wells went with a female officer and fell in love with the idea of police work. Wells reported feeling very supported by her family, although she acknowledged that her mother and grandmother are a little worried because of fear. "My entire family is scared because it is such a scary job right now but they are very-supportive." Wells described her motivation to become a police officer as wanting to prove she can do this. "I want to prove I can do this – that's my motivation."

Results

The purpose of this research was to describe the lived experiences of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy. A qualitative research design was selected as it allowed the recruits' voices to be heard. Specifically, a phenomenological study was conducted for entrance-level police recruits to describe their lived experiences while participating in an academy. Data was collected via individual interviews, participants' completion of a written questionnaire, and a review of participants' personal goal statements. Themes emerged from the interviews and were then triangulated with the responses to each recruit's written questionnaire and personal goal statement.

Theme Development

The study was grounded in Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and McClelland's (1973) motivation theory. These theories were selected for their relevance to the entrance-level police academy. Recruits are moving toward self-actualization and they are driven by power, achievement, or affiliation motive. The analysis revealed three major themes, nine subthemes, and 27 codes. A summary of the major themes is provided in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Themes

Major Themes	Subthemes	Codes
Motivation	Help others	Help (26)
	Community perspective	Police (15), Them (youth, kids, community members (16), Change (6), Experiences (6), Minorities (4), Societal views (11)
	Wanted to be a police officer	Family (22), Ride-along (3), Seasonal officer (7)
	Prove	Prove (6)
Support	Encouragement	Support (45), Friends (22), Worried (11), Excited (5)
Challenges	Covid-19	Covid (20)
	Recruitment	Good (4), Waiting/hear back (9), Polygraph (4)
	Gender	Girl (14)
	Academy	Study/learn (13), Different departments/agencies (10), Aware (8), Hard (8), Fail (6), Instructors (5), Respect (5)

Research Question Responses-Motivation

The first theme to emerge was *motivation*. The theme of motivation focused on why the recruits wanted to be police officers. These motivations included applying to police agencies or departments, being hired by an agency/department, entering, and completing the entrance-level police academy. Participants identified a variety of different motivations and these emerged in the subthemes. The four subthemes that emerged from motivation were: help others, change community perceptions, always wanted to be a police officer, and prove they can do this.

Help others. The first subtheme to emerge from the major theme *motivation* was to help others. Bates, who grew up with a grandfather in law enforcement stated, "I like the aspect of helping people and being able to make a change." Whereas Earl, who grew up in what he described as a "rough neighborhood" and with "a generational history of drug trafficking in his family" stated, "I knew I wanted to show the youth there were options other than drugs and what they saw in the neighborhood." Earl also stated that being a police officer would give him "the satisfaction of the ability to be able to say, I helped someone." While Bates and Earl had opposite life experiences as it related to their family members' involvement with law enforcement, other recruits held jobs before applying to become a police officer and felt they were motivated because of the professional skills they knew they possessed.

Hawk graduated college with a Bachelor of Science degree and was managing a nightclub, but he knew "I always wanted to be in law enforcement." Specifically, Hawk saw an opportunity to "Help others, especially as a minority, and to be able to say-Hey, I'm one of you." Pepper was also employed in another field before applying to law enforcement. When asked to describe why she wanted to become a police officer, her response was "To serve and protect the

community that I live in." Sykes applied after working in customer service for over eight years. Sykes recognized that in her customer service position she liked "to help people" and decided "I like people and I wanted to do something bigger so I decided to join law enforcement."

Two of the recruits had direct experience with law enforcement that motivated them to consider a career in law enforcement. In Lily's case, she was assaulted in college. She described the officer who handled her case as being supportive and making her feel safe. When asked why she wanted to become a police officer, Lily responded "I want to be that light for someone else and help them, even on their worst day and even if I have to arrest them." Kono described growing up and having contact with the police because of circumstances with her family, "I grew up in an unstable environment and the police came to our house." Kono described her perceptions of her early interactions with police officers as "the police weren't mean but they weren't nice, [I'm] not sure how to describe them." Kono described attending a high school where there was a lot of sexual violence in an environment that was not supportive of students' reports. Kono felt that students who had been sexually assaulted in her school did not have a voice. "Students did not have a voice and I want to give them a voice. I want to be able to help people."

Prentis expounded upon the idea of law enforcement as a helping profession stating, "I know that it's a cheesy answer but I love that I respond to calls for duty…I know that I will see people at their best and their worst and I love that you're always there to help them." TC summed up the helping nature of police work with the following statements, "We need people out there to protect and serve, we really do. We [law enforcement] are the sheepdog, trying to protect the sheep." Finally, Sykes felt she was speaking for everyone when she stated, "…and

this is going to sound like the answer everyone gives, but I really want to help people."

Similarly, Kono stated:

> I want to be able to help people. I know that is such a common answer, but it is the right answer for me. That's truly and honestly what I want to do. I want to catch people. It sounds so cliché but I want to help people, it's what I want to do. It's cliché but it's true.

Community perspective. Changing the community perspective emerged as the second subtheme of the major theme *motivation*. Many of the recruits referred to the broader, negative perspective of policing that was occurring nationally throughout 2020. Both sets of recruits entered the academy during a year when police brutality was in the headlines regularly and politicians and community members were calling for the police to be defunded.

Wells reported an altruistic motivation to become an officer, "I really want to help my community. I feel like the best way to do this is to become a police officer." Bates discussed her limited familiarity with society's attitudes toward police. Bates stated, "I have not experienced these negative attitudes toward police personally, but I've seen it on media and I have a chance to show not all police officers are bad." Lacey summed the national attitude up in the following statements:

> Right when I started the academy was when everything with the police started to happen. Scrutinized, defund, all cops are bad. Now at this point, I am more motivated to show that not all cops are bad and I want to change perspectives.

Barnes described her motivation to become a police officer as being a desire "to make a change in the community, especially with everything going on with police. I just want to help improve that." Hawk viewed policing as having a "humanitarian" aspect. He described, "I see a lot of the bad, people don't really like us [police] for what we do, I see the good." Hawk believed

it was "pretty important to help" and viewed his role as an "opportunity for outreach." Lacey also viewed her role as a police officer as "knowing in these times that I can show others that not all cops are bad."

Race and policing was important to several of the recruits. Earl had been a stand-out athlete in high school who joined the military. Before leaving for the military, he coached youth football and knew he was a role model. "I coached football one year after graduating high school and I know how young black children looked up to me." Earl's position as a role model within his community was not lost on him and is evident in the statement, "Knowing that I can be a positive example to those who do not see a way out of the rough neighborhood I grew up in and returned to is a big step." Jones described "growing up I didn't see that many minority police officers." Reflecting on his experiences in the academy, Jones stated "It's a challenge doing this now because of what's going on in the world. You don't really see that many minorities or females."

Some recruits described disparity in their relationship with family members or friends because of current attitudes toward the police. Kono has a brother who thinks "I should sit behind a desk. He doesn't want me to get killed," another brother who "thinks women, in general, should not be police," and a sister who is "not pro-police." Lily's friends were worried and stated, "now I have to worry about you going to work," while some of her other friends questioned why she would want to become a police officer.

Prentis and Sykes both recognized how difficult their decisions to become police officers had been on their mothers. Prentis stated, "I know my mom is worried right now because of what's going on with law enforcement, but it's a pendulum." Whereas, Sykes stated, "My mom definitely did not want me to do it." She then tied her mom's concern to that of her friends'

responses, "Some of them [friends] seemed to respond like my mom. They are concerned about my safety because of the way things are with police. It doesn't help things." Wells found that her entire family was supportive, but also reported, "My entire family is scared because it's such a scary job right now."

A few recruits used the attitudes toward police that were being expressed in society as a motivator in the academy. Pepper believed society's view of police had "gotten even worse" and stated, "obviously the world we're living in hates us even more." Yet Pepper was motivated by this perceived hatred stating, "When you see what's going on out there, and you want to be out there helping, and you can't because you're in this extended academy. It just pisses you off that you can't be out there helping." Pepper's frustration stemmed from the delays in the academy due to the Covid-19 pandemic that onset in the U.S. at the same time the academy began. Hopps expressed a similar frustration about the extended time in the academy that caused her to "have to keep reminding myself why I started." When reflecting on what her experiences have been in the academy, Hopps determined that what she saw police officers doing in her community-helping people, has given her "something good to think about with everything going on with the community." Ultimately, Hopps stated, "I hope to help improve law enforcement views held by the community."

Wells described the impact of what was going on in society on her motivation. Wells was able to relate what she had learned in the academy to society's perception of police and recognized how people could question a police officer's actions because they have not had the training. Wells captured her thoughts about training and society's perspective with the following:

> My motivation has definitely changed. I see now…once getting all this training and
> understanding how and what these officers are actually doing and what their thought

processes are and what they are encountering, especially in today's world. I want to be out there helping them, defending them, this is what our job is. I want society to understand. You [hear] people say why didn't they go for this tool or use this [response]- because there was a knife and people just don't get it because they have not had the training.

Wanted to be a police officer. The third subtheme to emerge from the major theme *motivation* was the belief many recruits held that they had always wanted to become a police officer. The onset of the desire to be a police officer was not the same for each recruit but once they realized it, they always knew it was what they wanted to do. For some, they had known since a young age, for others, it was after participating in a ride-along with a law enforcement agency, or after studying criminal justice. A majority of the recruits indicated being influenced by a family member and a common reference was made to coming from a family of first responders.

Barnes reported being aware that she had always wanted to apply but was hindered by the age restriction. In Maryland, a police recruit must be 21 years old to be certified as a police officer. Prentis also knew she always wanted to be a police officer, "I just know that this is something I've always wanted to do."

Pepper stated she "wanted to be a police officer since at least middle school." She described the desire as being ingrained in her personality and interests, "I was always playing sports in high school and always had a dominant personality. Just always what I wanted to do. I did not know what else I would do." Wells was curious about what police officers did, recognizing an interest in policing when she was in high school. She stated, "driving along, seeing them on the side of the road, I always wondered what they did." Her father nudged her in

the direction of law enforcement by encouraging her to go on a ride-along. Wells met a female deputy and "she took me on ride-along and I just fell in love with it." Years later Wells stated, "So I am finally beginning my dream job and I am very excited for this journey!" TC knew he wanted to be a police officer by the time he was in middle school. TC disclosed having a language and reading disability that impacted him in elementary and middle school and included acting out behaviors in school. TC stated, "Throughout my schooling, I tended to act out due to my disability." Around the time TC was in 8th grade his father told him he would not amount to anything if he continued to act out in school. TC was motivated to change, "I knew I wanted to get in law enforcement of some kind and I felt it was destiny to serve and protect."

Jones knew he wanted to be a police officer after speaking to several people about the role of a police officer. Jones described his journey to becoming a police officer in the following manner:

I've had people talk to me about becoming a police officer and I was like ok, that's an option. More people talked to me, and I talked to people about what the benefits of being a police officer is, I liked the benefits. I had surrounded myself with people who are police officers and picked their brains.

Once Jones decided to become a police officer, he found the process was lengthy. He began applying in 2014 and made it to a certain point in the hiring process but failed to get hired. Jones seemed to understand he lacked some life experience and joined the National Guard to gain experience, "I made the decision to do the National Guard and I talked to a lot of people and my godfather said it was a competition to get the job because I was going against people who had experience and military."

One recruit did not want to be a police officer as much as she wanted to be in the forensic field. Kono described how "I have been wanting to go and do something in forensic psychology, analytics for 13 years." However, she learned that she needed police experience to obtain the career she anticipated. Initially, her goal was to get her foot in the door and pursue a federal position in a forensic field. The experience of the police academy has not dissuaded her from her goals as much as she has learned the field is more diverse than she anticipated. During the course of the interview, she discussed an interest in forensic psychology, a desire to work in the criminal intelligence division, and a desire to become an expert witness for court cases.

Lacey had a similar experience in that she knew she wanted to pursue a degree in another field until she began taking classes in that field. Lacey reported, "I started to look into being a police officer and started to take some classes which I found to be more interesting [than my previous major]." Lacey transferred to a criminal justice program and worked as a seasonal officer to see if she was interested in becoming an officer. Lacey described transferring degree programs and working seasonally as "a good stepping-stone to see if I liked it before committing to an academy." Hopps' desire to be a police officer also stemmed from college studies. Hopps had to complete an internship for a course at the community college she was attending. "I came to an internship that was supposed to be one month and it turned into multiple months. I met many role models and decided I wanted to be a police officer."

Lily did not have the lifelong desire to be a police officer or the immediate realization that it was the career for her until she was in her mid-20s; however, her family seemed to recognize it was a field she was destined for. When Lily told her parents she wanted to be a police officer, they replied that they "were surprised she didn't do this sooner." Pepper

experienced a similar response from her friends. When she told them she was going to become a police officer she reported "they weren't surprised."

Several recruits had first responders in their family who inspired them to become police officers. Prentis stated, "I've always wanted to pursue law enforcement, first responders run in my family." Bates described a family history of law enforcement including her grandfather, an uncle, and an "aunt who always wanted to be one." Jones disclosed, "My mom is a probation officer and my uncle was federal law enforcement, and I was following in their footsteps." Lacey disclosed that her father was a firefighter and "it is in the same realm." Prentis knew she wanted to be in law enforcement from a young age stating, "I've always wanted to pursue law enforcement, first responders run in my family." Robinson's mother had wanted to study forensic science and shared her love of crime shows with him. When the opportunity presented itself, Robinson decided to become a police officer stating, "I was going to fulfill her dream but I was not a scientist."

Bates had a grandfather in law enforcement. When considering her motivation, she summed up the concepts from the subtheme of help others, change the community perspective, and recognizing the influence of family members on her desire to be a police officer with the following:

> I just want to help people. I just want to create a positive light. I have always had a lot of respect [for law enforcement-my grandfather. I just want to make it [policing] a positive light, building relations with the community. Treat people as humans and have them see us as humans. I took a lot of courses in college, queers and police, minorities and police. You can see where the beliefs came from. I think it is important to break down the divisions between us [police] and certain groups.

Several recruits discussed the impact of their motivation to become a police officer. Prentis was from a family of first responders, "My mom is an EMT and I'm pursuing law enforcement-just think it's cool." She also disclosed, "I have a younger sister watching me." Pepper reported she was the first member of her family who wanted to pursue a career in law enforcement and "now my brother does it." Earl was one of six children and described himself as being from a family with a "generational history of drug trafficking and use." As the second oldest sibling, Earl discussed the choices of his oldest brother and another brother to get involved in crime. He also stated, "We have three younger brothers and they have seen my decision to become a police officer, they are seeing they have different options." Lacey reported, "My little brothers see that I can handle myself."

Prove. The final subtheme to emerge from the major theme *motivation* was the concept of proving oneself. For some recruits, they wanted to prove to themselves they could complete the academy and become a police officer. Other recruits were motivated to prove to others that they could do this.

The following was shared by the recruits who wanted to prove to themselves that they had what it takes to become a police officer. Wells not only described wanting to become a police officer but also added the motivation she had to "prove to myself that I can do this." Bates summed up her motivation as "I know I can do this." When reflecting on her academy experience, she stated I like to push myself and prove I can do it." Whereas; Kono stated "I do not want to get this far and then not finish. I want to look back in 20 years and be like I did that, I frickin did that! I want to be proud of myself.

Sykes also offered insight about challenging herself, specifically, "…my motivation was to challenge myself." She was not disappointed. When describing the impact of the academy experience on her, Sykes reported,

> I think it's had a huge impact on me. It's made me challenge myself. It's made me push myself and made me do things I did not think I could do before. I think it's made me a stronger person, a better person, so yeah.

Not only did the recruits want to prove to themselves that they could become police officers; some were motivated by a desire to prove to others that they could become officers. TC, when discussing his motivation to become a police officer, stated "I also joined to let people know you can overcome anything. The naysayers gave me the ability to show I can do it." When Jones applied to his employing agency he was initially hired as a correctional officer. He wanted to transfer to a police officer position but had to wait two years. Jones used those years to "try to do everything with training and get to be known so when the time came to be a police officer there would not be any negative comments about me."

Some recruits shared a sense of doubt that caused them to question their ability during the academy. Lily disclosed her doubts, "…there have been moments when I've questioned myself – do I really want to do this? Can I make it in this field?" Pepper disclosed the experience had caused her to question herself, "You second guess yourself." Kono described the challenge to her commitment to become a police officer that she has experienced during the academy, "My ideals have really changed about why I want to become a police officer but throughout the academy, it's really been challenged."

All of the recruits shared feeling supported by their families despite the personal concerns family members had for the recruits' safety. Some of the recruits shared that they wanted to

prove themselves to their family members in the sense that they did not want to let their families down. Prentis shared "I really want to make my family proud." Hopps was attracted to her employer because she had done an internship with them and felt like they were part of her extended family, "It goes back to a lot of officers have made me family and I feel like I would be letting them down if I didn't complete the academy." Lily, addressing her doubts, stating "I'm too stubborn to quit! I never want to feel like a disappointment, I want to make my family proud."

Research Question Responses – Support

The next major theme to emerge was *support*. Initially, the recruits discussed support in the academy environment from peers and instructors. Additionally, the majority of the recruits reported feeling supported by family about their decision to become a police officer, with a few disclosing that some family members were slow to offer their support. The variations in the levels of supports were generational with some recruits reporting their grandparents did not understand why they wanted to become a police officer, other recruits had family members who were reluctant to offer support because of their concerns that the recruit's decision to become a police officer could harm them, and other recruits reported family members were hesitant to offer support because they feared for the safety of the recruit.

Encouragement. The subtheme that emerged from the major theme of *support* was encouragement. Several recruits described the experience as like being with family. The recruits also described support for physical training activities that resembled the encouragement one shows for their favorite sports team; cheering, yelling, making noise. Recruits from both academies described an environment in which those who finished a physical activity first would cheer on those who were still participating. The recruits also discussed how they would engage

in extracurricular physical training activities with peers who needed additional assistance. Academically, the support was not described in as cohesive a manner as the support for physical training.

The recruits were asked about peer support in the academy. Sykes described it as "Everybody is really supportive of each other, whether academic or physical." All of the recruits identified peer support for physical training. Barnes, "So when we have physical training workouts, it's like the verbal motivation, the defensive tactics-the ok you can do this, the pep talks." Kono, "So the support comes when there is physical activity. We will usually cheer each other on but if someone falls behind, the people who finished first will go back and help the person who is last." Lacey described her experience as being stovepiped by agency affiliation or personal friendships at the beginning and then "By midpoint, we had come together and were cheering each other on, especially [during] physical training or defensive tactics."

One recruit had a different perspective. Jones described support in the following way, "The support is kind of like umm when we do runs and the workouts is probably the only time we try to motivate each other." Jones did have a different idea of support believing that he should not have to motivate others. Specifically, Jones described support in the following manner:

When we graduate, we'll be in the FTO [Field Training Officer] and once we get past the FTO we'll be by ourselves and if you can't motivate yourself to get through a run, or a workout, or if you want to slack off and not give 100% when everyone else is giving 100%, I'm not sure if I want you to be my partner or if I really want you as back up."

The value of the support was appreciated by the recruits. Several recruits identified the role of the "positives" especially if the recruit had messed up during training. They also shared an appreciation for being able to discuss the negatives. "Any gripes, we are able to bounce ideas

off each other and rally around," (Hawk). Kono also described vent sessions, "Sometimes we just have vent sessions, just asking for a few minutes to vent." Lily described being able to go to her friends in the class and state "I can't do this." She has found her male classmates often have a different response than her female classmates.

The recruits supported each other emotionally. Pepper described the constant pressure of being together "We're seeing each other 24/7, we get on each other's nerves, we're human. I ride with two other females every day and if I'm lacking motivation, their motivation steps in." Prentis described her relationship with her cohort in the following manner:

> I think something I didn't expect from where we were to where we are now is the bond I've developed with everyone in the class. On days when your motivation is not there, the 24 people in your class can pick you up. I know they refer to the thin blue line but it's amazing how we started off as strangers and now we would have each other's back during anything.

Barnes described concern the group had for two recruits who each lost family members during the academy. As a whole, the group got them a card but individually, "We let everyone know we were there if they needed us but we did not want to push." Earl described his peers as "We're a family. We lost four recruits [failed to meet the training standards] during the academy and almost the entire class came to tears as we were saying goodbye to them." Hawk explained the support the recruits offer to each other, "We are experiencing the same thing with the same recruits." Hopps expanded on this when she described the class getting tased, "We go tased today-that was probably one of my biggest challenges so far. I did not like it but my classmates were very-supportive. They got tased too." Prentis described a similar experience:

I mean obviously any time you get 25 people together from different backgrounds you

won't get along perfectly but we're like a family and we've got each other's back.

Probably the first time we realized it was when we got OC [Oleoresin Capsicum]

sprayed. It isn't something everyone understands and some felt it was the worst pain they

ever experienced. We were all there together.

There was a difference in the way the two academies operated that became evident.

Academy E met as a group in the parking lot every morning before entering the academy

building and every evening before the left for the day. Earl described Academy E in the

following way:

Every day we pick each other up. [Your peers] are around to tell you what's going on.

Sometimes we get in each other's business, but other times we just pick someone up

who's having a bad day and remind them it's just another day.

Hawk described a similar experience with the collective group in Academy E, "When one

struggles, we all need to get behind the one who is struggling."

Academy S described smaller cohorts developing within the large group. Kono described

smaller cohorts, "We used to do study groups-we don't anymore." Kono gave two friends credit

for helping her get through the academy, "My two friends, I don't think I would have been able

to get through the academy without them but they are there." When speaking about the large

cohort of the entire class, Kono stated, "We are beginning to trust and we've had to open up."

The recruits also disclosed feeling supported by the academy staff and their employing

agencies. Barnes shared feeling frustrated that she did not believe she had performed well during

Emergency Vehicle Operations (EVOC) training. "EVOC, I did not do as well as I thought I did

and it was all over my face. The director pulled me aside and told me I did well and to lighten

up." Hawk referred to struggling at the range, "I had a hard time at the shooting range. Staff helped me a lot." Lily described her belief that the academy staff wants to see them succeed, "They don't want us to fail. That's not their goal, they want everyone to make it through." Lily expanded further on this belief with the following description:

> When there is a big block of instruction, they give us everything we need. They walk us through everything so we are not unfamiliar with the scenario. Sometimes it is too much and then you come out of it and you're like I get it. With pepper spray, they walked us through step-by-step and even sprayed us with canisters of water to practice. Handcuffing was step-by-step and practiced over and over.

Research Question Responses – Challenges

The third major theme to emerge was *challenges*. Both of the academies were impacted by the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic that resulted in a State of Emergency being declared in Maryland in March 2020 and continued into 2021. The impact of Covid-19 included the academies moving to a blended learning environment that included both classroom (in-person) and virtual learning. Also, both academies were suspended from operating multiple times, delaying their graduation.

Recruitment was a subtheme that emerged under the major theme *challenges*. The recruitment issues included female recruits being processed faster, getting through the process, and the amount of paperwork involved. Some also found the process to be challenging, including polygraphs and oral board interviews.

Gender emerged as a subtheme as well. While most of the female recruits felt supported by their family members and friends, their family members' and friends' perceptions about their

abilities to become a police officer were a challenge. The female recruits were described as "girls" by their family members, and their small stature and attractiveness were also discussed.

The academy was recognized as a subtheme. The difficulty included mastering skills and pressure the recruits placed on themselves to do well. Some recruits were placed in leadership positions. These positions of authority were described as challenging, mostly as they pertained to motivating others.

Recruitment. The second subtheme to emerge from the major theme *challenges* was recruitment. Recruits described the process as mostly good. TC stated, "As far as my department, they were pretty good." Wells also had a positive impression of her recruitment experience, "My experience is actually really good." Many of the recruits knew someone in their hiring agency. Sykes found out about the position, "I knew about it from friends who worked for the department and other friends who knew about the department and they all encouraged me to apply there." Sykes applied to her employer because she "knew the people in the county and wanted to stay here." Hopps stated, "It was great, they were very helpful."

Several recruits had been seasonal officers. Like Sykes, Robinson knew what agency he wanted to work for. He wanted to work for the agency where he had been a seasonal officer, "Several departments reached out but I really wanted to work for [my employer]. Command staff reached out to me when they knew I had applied and were encouraging." Bates had also been a seasonal officer for her employing agency.

The amount of time from application to hire was varied. Prentis stated, "I applied to two different agencies and I got very lucky, my process was very quick from start to finish." Prentis applied in June or July and was hired by September. Kono's process took approximately 18 months. Jones was initially hired as a correctional officer. He was told he would be considered

for a police officer position after working as a correctional officer for two years. As Jones

described it, "it was kind of frustrating because of the fact that I wanted to go straight into

becoming a police officer and they were telling me we want you to be a correctional officer

first." Hawk found his process to be "very lengthy compared to my peers." From initial

application to beginning the recruitment process was six months.

Recruits referred to the intensity of the process. Lacey found the process to be stressful,

"It stressed me out to apply, the packets were so big, a lot of info, driving record, one packet

wanted a note from my eye doctor about my corrective lenses." TC was impressed that his

agency was interested in asking questions that he thought were important characteristics for a

police officer to possess. TC determined "[They] asked very important questions-what were my

characteristics, what was my temper?" Bates found the background packet to be lengthy and had

the added stress of being told she might have to come back for another polygraph "because of the

way the poly was recording." She described being worried because she did not hear anything for

a while. Ultimately, she did not need to submit to an additional polygraph. Barnes was stressed

by the oral boards and the polygraph, "I hate interviews and I knew how important it was to pass

oral boards." She used her connections with the agency to speak to a Lieutenant about the

process and he provided tips for the interviews.

The female recruits in Academy S reported being hired quickly and they stated it was

because their agencies were interested in hiring female officers. Wells, "I know for me and the

other two females in our class, they were all hired really fast." Pepper reported, "They were

quick to hire the females. We were hired quicker than the males." Both Wells and Pepper knew

their agency processed their applications at a faster rate because other agencies were trying to

hire them away. Pepper, "When [my agency] figured out that the women were getting offers quicker [from other agencies], they hired us sooner."

Lily, who had been assaulted in college, highlighted a challenge in the recruitment process:

> The only annoying thing was that my background investigators kept changing up. I would answer the background questions with one and then there would be a new one. The questions were pretty personal that I had to disclose. I had two male background investigators and I had to explain what happened in college…I wish I had had a female.

Lacey found the waiting process, which for her was approximately 6-7 months, to be stressful. She described the process in the following manner:

> Not knowing was very-stressful, I didn't know if it [the application] was received, if it was lost. One place I applied they called and said a Lieutenant was going to call in a few days and I never heard from them again.

Kono's application to hire took approximately 18 months. She applied to seven departments and began the process with five of them. "I would get through the process until background check. I was verbally told I was at the top of the list, they wanted me for the academy, and then a month later I would get a rejection letter. Later Kono found out a former employer was giving her a bad reference. During the background for her hiring agency Kono disclosed, "I explained to my investigator what happened and he was like that makes sense. If not for that background investigator, I don't think I would've been hired." Earl described a similar process, "I would make it to the background and then I would get the letter that I wasn't accepted." He later learned he was not accepted because of the area he was from, "I was friendly with the recruiters that conducted my background checks and when I spoke to them after getting

the denial letters, I was told it wasn't about me but where I was from." A buddy encouraged him to apply to his current agency and he was hired within one year.

Gender. The third subtheme to emerge from the major theme *challenges* was gender. Being a female recruit in a police academy was not lost on the recruits. According to Barnes, "…there are so few females in police work."

Bates was a squad leader in the academy and the members of her squad were male and co-workers. She found herself engaging in behaviors she considered maternal and wondered if it was because she was a female squad leader or if it was because the squad was from the same agency and had some familiarity with each other.

> I'm a squad leader. The squad assignment has impacted me. You're responsible for everyone [in your squad]. It can be frustrating and exhausting. You tell someone to do something and they do not do it. You tell people repeatedly to shine boots, shave face, iron uniform, and they don't. Then I wonder what I can do about it. I can't make you shine your boots. I am not going to iron your uniform. I think some of it is because we are from the same department. I don't think there is a division between squads.

Later during the interview, Bates expanded on the struggles she had with her squad, "I can tell you to do things all I want and they are adults and don't do it. I feel like I am babying everyone all the time." Lily identified the differences between seeking support from her female classmates and her male classmates:

> I can go to my friends and state everything is wrong, I can do this and sometimes they share similar feelings. I've got the guy friends who are like shut up, you did fine, you did it. I've got the girl friends who are like I don't know if I did well either but I'm sure it will be fine.

Many of the female recruits reported family members and friends being concerned about their ability to become a police officer because they were "a girl." In addition to support from family and friends, some recruits reported gender concerns about the academic environment. These concerns seemed to be held individually. Lacey described her perceptions of being a female in an academy:

I went in not knowing anyone and thought I would be the only female, also [there was] no one from my agency. I thought I might be the outcast. Once I saw another female, it calmed me down and I knew we would get through it together. It was not as gender-segregated as I thought it would be.

Pepper described the instructors as having to adjust to having a large number of females in the recruit class. Approximately 40% of Academy S consisted of female recruits. According to Pepper:

This is the first recruit class with a large number of females coming through. There has been testosterone and arguments. Not sure the instructors were prepared to handle it. The instructors have had to adapt to the larger number of females.

Regarding external support (or lack of support) from family members and friends, Barnes disclosed:

My grandfather wasn't so thrilled. He thought I wasn't going to be able to do it because I'm small and a girl. Told me I was going to get beat up out there. I am one of eight kids, aside from my grandfather, my family is very-supportive and pro-police.

Lacey had a similar experience with her grandmother who "had a hard time with it [her decision to become a police officer]." She also disclosed, "It took a little while for my mom to get used to it and she can tell I can handle myself; she is more comfortable and she supports me." When

Pepper told her family she wanted to be a police officer "They were pretty shocked, I am a smaller female." After getting over their shock and they "realized I wasn't kidding, they were excited for me." Wells' was supported but when she told her family, her mom and grandmother "didn't want their little girl to get hurt because of the job."

Lily's friends "said I am too pretty and shouldn't try to go into a field that is dangerous." Lily has turned the negative perceptions around. People have said to her "You're not intimidating, you're small. When you walk in the room, you're a woman." Lily reported confidence in her knowledge, "I know I can defuse a situation faster and better. I am all about the brawn but there is a tactfulness to being a police officer that not everyone can do."

Lily described the support the academy instructors demonstrated to the recruits. Pepper expanded on this with her belief that the recruits "females especially" are so needed they get more opportunities to mess up, "We get more chances to mess up that we shouldn't be given, but [are] within the number of chances we can be given. My perception is that we are so badly needed, they [hiring agencies] aren't taking the best they can take-they're just taking what they need."

Covid-19. The subtheme Covid-19 emerged from the major theme *challenges*. Primarily the recruits described frustration with the constant start and stop of the academy. Hopps, "Corona definitely didn't help." Additionally, recruits expressed the belief that their training experience was unlike that of other academies in that they did not do as much physical training as they may have if there was not a pandemic. Pepper, "Because of Covid everything has flip-flopped." Wells, "because everything I expected of the academy is so different-just because of Covid." Finally, some recruits described the stress of being in a never-ending academy. Bates has found the process of being a police recruit during the pandemic to be "very draining and Covid makes

it worse." Barnes described her experience in the academy as "the stress and the Coronavirus, it's unbelievable what we go through."

Kono described the emotional impact of the Covid-19 restrictions on her including having a long-distance relationship ending and being away from her father and pap-pap, who live in another state, and who have both been sick while she has been in the academy. She reported that the academy has helped her to become mentally tougher. "Covid did not make it [the academy] easier. It has made me mentally tougher and I have learned a lot of things that I don't believe I would have learned in any other job." Lily found herself wondering if this is the career for her, "With Covid, there have been moments when I've questioned myself." Pepper described the helplessness she has felt during the academy, "You've been in the academy for over a year. Hasn't changed [motivation] just pissed-off at the start and stop-things we can't really change right now."

Difficulty of the academy. The subtheme, difficulty of the academy, emerged from the major theme *challenges*. Barnes described the challenge of the academy as "Trying to comprehend how much police officers do; I had no idea how much they do." Lacey echoed this, "I definitely did not realize what was involved. I learned how much time and effort goes into being a cop, how much training you have to go through." Similarly, Sykes described, "I knew it would be challenging, I knew it would be hard, but I didn't know how hard."

Bates found the combination of different agencies in the same environment to be somewhat challenging. Bates described the regional nature of the recruits as contributing to different messages about procedures, "Different departments have different takes on things and we are told one thing by one department and something different by another." Hopps found the

change in instructors to be a challenge describing the departure of some instructors and arrival of others as "being on a roller coaster."

Hawk described the academy as teaching him, "especially the paramilitary structure." He described his struggle with being a class leader, "…biggest challenge was motivating the class." Jones, who was in the military, described becoming tired of the paramilitary structure, "The kind of like standing at attention and calling the room to attention is kind of annoying to me because I have done it for so long." Kono had been expecting a more organized academy and found herself challenged by the constant changes; however, she recognized Covid-19 impacted how the academy "keeps changing."

Lacey perceived that a challenge for her, identified by the instructors, was her quiet and observing nature, "I am more of an observer and was told I needed to be louder. By the end, I was loud enough." Lacey and Wells described the need to prove themselves. For Lacey, this need was based on her size, "My size, I'm pretty short, was a constant reminder I needed to prove myself to people." Wells disclosed, "Leading up to the academy I never thought I'd be getting into it – rolling around with the guys. Now it's ok." Lily described how the profession removes society's perception of officers as not being humans, "I am no longer a person or a woman, I am an officer." She struggled with the depersonalization and, like Lacey, preferred to assume the role of an observer, "We are told to command the space we are in. I would prefer to walk in a room and not be noticed than to have all eyes on me."

Lily found the difficulty of the academy to be the constant observations, "I struggled during firearms because of the stress of everyone being around." She reported similar struggles with EVOC and Redman [defensive tactics training]. Robinson expressed difficulty putting the academic learning into practical learning:

The biggest thing was the practicals. They were very-challenging as they required you to consolidate a lot of things into one event. You approach them confident, thinking you know what you are doing only to find out that you don't. Traffic stops was tough – I kept missing the gun in the car. Mentally it was challenging. When you failed before, you did not want to fail again. The scenarios are constantly moving and they are a representation of what you will face as an officer.

TC also found the practicals to be "kind of challenging." Like Robinson, TC described "having to take everything you learned through most of the academy and apply it."

Research Question Responses

The research questions utilized in the study were designed to examine the motivations of minority recruits to complete the entrance-level police academy and become police officers. The questions were grounded in the guiding theoretical framework of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and McClelland's needs theory. The central research question sought to capture the lived experiences of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy. The central research question was supported by three subquestions designed to capture an understanding of minority recruits' experiences to complete the entrance-level police academy and understand the academy experience, as well as understand the support they received and their experiences with recruitment. In the following section, the findings from the analysis are applied to the central research question and the subquestions.

Central Research Question Responses

The central research question guiding this study was: What were the lived experiences of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy? The central research question was designed to gain an understanding of minority police recruits' experiences

in the entrance-level police academy. Obtaining responses from the 15 recruits participating in

two different entrance-level police academies resulted in a broad array of descriptions of their

lived experiences. An analysis of the responses to the interviews and discussion questions as well

as the personal goal statements, using coding, resulted in the identification of three major

themes-motivation, support, and challenges. The major themes were supported by the three

subquestions and further analysis resulted in nine subthemes being identified. The central

research question was answered by the major themes as well as the nine subthemes.

The lived experiences of minority police recruits were impacted by the Covid-19

pandemic that onset in the United States in 2020; specifically impacting Maryland in March

2020 and continuing to have an impact in 2021. The impact of Covid-19 included both

academies being extended beyond the initial timeframe of approximately seven months. Also,

the schedules of the academies were modified several times. As Pepper described it, "Because of

Covid, everything has been flip-flopped."

Recruits in Academy E were scheduled to graduate the week after the interviews were

conducted and being so close to the end, they made limited references to the impact of Covid-19.

Academy S had experienced several delays in completing the entrance-level academy that were

directly-related to Covid-19. Wells reported, "There were a lot of breaks [time out of the

academy because of Covid-19]." They were scheduled to graduate approximately two months

after the interviews were conducted and they were beginning to see the light at the end of the

tunnel.

The extension of the academy time and the breaks in learning took a toll on some of the

recruits. Lily found herself asking, "Do I really want to do this? Can I make it in this field?"

questions she attributed to the Covid-19 delays. It also caused recruits to question the quality of

the training they were receiving. Barnes disclosed, "Sometimes I think they are very unorganized but I can say that is probably related to Covid." Kono on the other hand stated, "This was about what I expected, Covid threw a wrench in it, but is still what I expected; long days, tough days." Despite having an expectation for the academy, Kono expressed her disappointment in the structure of the academy; although she did attribute Covid-19 as impacting the structure. "Well, I think the structure of the academy could be done a heck of a lot better than it is now but I know Covid has impacted that." Hopps summed it up when describing the structure of the academy, "Corona definitely didn't help." Lacey believed that Covid-19 "messed up" the academy experience. "Drill instructors, physical training, and how the academy usually runs; what I expected was definitely not what went on."

Despite the impact of Covid-19, the recruits were focused during their interviews, and their responses provided insight into their lived experiences as minority recruits in an entrance-level police academy. Many of the recruits described their relationships with their peers and instructors as positive. Barnes shared, "Now I have become so close with people that I can't imagine them not in my life." Hopps summed it up as "Our strengths and our weaknesses balance out."

Several recruits referred to the academy, and by extension their employers, as "family." In the analysis, "family" was referenced 22 times. Hopps described "our academy family," complete with sibling groups. Prentis described getting 25 people together from different backgrounds as, "you won't get along perfectly but we're like a family and we've got each other's backs."

Missing from the dialogue was the recruits' status as minorities influencing their experience. Robinson shared, "I never felt singled out for my race or background. Any disparity I

experienced was due to the different departments represented by my classmates." Lacey described her initial concern about possibly being the only female in her recruit class. "I thought I might be the outcast. Once I saw another female, it calmed me down and I knew we would get through it together."

When discussing minorities, recruits identified the lack of Black police officers or the low numbers of female officers or they discussed their desire to be role models for other minorities or impoverished individuals. TC referenced the fact that he "will be the only African American officer" in his department but he does not view that as an issue because "it is a good, courteous department with a family-like environment." Earl viewed becoming a police officer as another way to give back. Earl described his views about the factors that influenced him to become a police officer as "If I give up, others will give up and I do not want to give others a reason to give up. There will not be more Black officers in policing, or other fields if we don't try." TC also discussed the need for diversity in policing, "My view is we need more diversity – we need to fill that gap. It's going to help society." Jones stated:

> Growing up I really didn't see that many minority police officers and I'm not sure what the deal was behind why minorities were not applying to be police officers. I thought it might benefit me because most employers struggle with hiring minorities, especially females, so I figured I would give it a shot.

The recruits identified one other issue that was specific to the female recruits. Two recruits questioned the attitudes of the instructors toward the female recruits including the struggles the academy instructors had with a recruit class that was over 30% female. Pepper stated "Being a female, this is the first recruit class with a large number of females coming through. There has been testosterone and arguments." One recruit felt as if some of the

instructors want the female recruits to quit. Lily stated, "We lost our only female instructor recently and I feel like some instructors look at us [female recruits] and ask, why are you here?" The extent of this perception is unknown as it was only referenced by two of the nine females from Academy S. Other factors contributing to the perception were also identified in the interview with Pepper who stated, "Not sure the instructors were prepared to handle it. The instructors have had to adapt to a large number of females." Pepper also inferred the quality of the female candidates may not have included the best candidates as much as it included female candidates. Specifically, she stated, "My perception is that we [females] are so badly-needed, they [hiring agencies] aren't taking the best they can take-they're just taking what they need."

The recruits recognized an awareness of what the position of police officers entails as a part of their experiences in the entrance-level police academy. Barnes stated, "My perception on police…I did not know how much they did. Learning how much they did behind closed doors, I've gained so much more respect for them than I previously had." Jones, in discussing his expectations of the police academy, disclosed:

> I didn't really have any expectations because I went through the corrections program. I didn't really have any expectations except there will be more to learn. Come to find out it's more than the corrections academy. I thought I have this and about two months in realized this is not going to be a cakewalk.

Hopps described her appreciation for training, "I knew they went through tough training but it's like WOW! I never even thought about how they were taught." Lacey disclosed, "I definitely did not realize what was involved. I learned how much time and effort goes into being a cop, how much you need to learn, how much training you have to go through." Wells shared how training has increased her understanding about why officers do what they do when

responding to citizens, "I see now…once getting all this training and understanding how and what these officers are actually doing, and what their thought processes are, and what they are encountering, especially in today's world."

Research Question Responses: SQ1

SQ1 for this study was: How do minority police recruits describe their lived experiences to complete the entrance-level academy and the academy experience? The purpose of this question was to gain an understanding of minority police recruits' experiences in the entrance-level academy. The major themes of *support* and *challenges* all contributed to SQ1. The subthemes that applied were support, friends, family, worried, study/learn, different departments/agencies, aware, hard, fail, instructors, and respect.

As stated previously, a void in the responses was any reference to race or ethnicity. When presenting to the recruit class, the recruits knew they had been selected for their minority status. Only one recruit mentioned race or ethnicity concerning the academy setting and that was Robinson who shared, "I never felt singled out for my race or background. Any disparity I experienced was due to the different departments represented by my classmates."

Three recruits were from other states. Given the nature of the academy as a commuter academy, most recruits went home every night. One recruit could not go home, even on weekends, because of Covid-19." Kono described having two good friends in the academy, sharing "My two friends – I don't think I would have been able to get through the academy without them." Kono also described the emotional toll of being away from her family, "I'm down here by myself, I live on my own and my family is three hours away…it's definitely very tough."

Disparity between departments was a common theme among recruits when discussing support in the academy. Several recruits mentioned the tendency of recruits to stay with peers from their agencies in the beginning. Bates highlighted this when describing going to the academy, "I was very fortunate, I was sent with five others from my agency…We felt tight-knit walking in." Barnes described the beginning of the academy as "In the beginning, we all came from different places but we all have the same goal to become a police officer." Wells stated, "At the beginning, we had some struggles, just like every class will." Bates described, "Honestly, in the very beginning it felt agency geared." At the time of the interview, Bates stated, "Now we are a tight-knit group, supportive of each other." TC expressed his belief "the team-work helped us come together." Robinson described his academy experience as follows, "At first it was rough. When we started nobody liked each other. Now when we struggle, everyone pitches in to help. One day I forgot my lunch and the others gave me food."

Several recruits described knowing that the recruits had melded into one unit. Recruits from Academy E described the shift as occurring about halfway through. Reflecting on her experience, Barnes described her academy experience as, "Now I have become so close with people that I can't imagine them not in my life." Hopps viewed her fellow recruits as being family, "It's amazing – it's like another family." Wells shared, "Now that we've been together almost the whole year, we're constantly supporting and encouraging each other." Lacey described coming together as, "Took a little while for us to all come together and once we realized we needed each other, we realized agencies don't need to stay together."

Research Question Responses: SQ2

SQ2 for this study was: How do minority police recruits describe the support (or lack of support) they received from family members and friends once they decided to become police

officers? All of the recruits reported feeling supported. The female recruits reported their family members and friends were concerned for their safety because of their gender and size. A few of the male recruits shared how some of their friends and family members were not supportive of their decision to become a police officer.

As stated, the female recruits reported initial resistance from family members because of their gender. Lacey shared, "My mom was not as sure [as my dad] since I am the oldest and only girl. My grandma had a hard time with me doing it." Bates stated, "My great grandmother is concerned that it is dangerous." Wells explained, "My mom and grandmother were scared because of fear. They did not want their little girl to get hurt because of the job." Barnes described her grandfather's response, "He thought I wasn't going to be able to do it because I am small and a girl." Kono was met with attitudes from her siblings that were not overly supportive, "I have an older brother and he is kind of supportive. He thinks women, in general, should not be police." Another brother "does not want me to get killed." Kono's sister is just "not pro-police." Hopps had a response for her mother's concerns, "My mom was not crazy about the idea, but I am one of four, and joke with her that she has three spares. She's not crazy about it, but she is supportive."

Except for one female recruit, the remaining nine disclosed as Caucasian. The five male recruits consisted of four African American or Black recruits and one recruit who identified as Asian and Indian. The male recruits reported losing relationships with family members and friends as a result of their decision to become a police officer. Earl reported support from his family to include an uncle who told him, "you're breaking the family curse." However, Earl also stated, "I lost two brothers, friends, and family members to this job." Robinson's decision to become a police officer created a conflict for his family members who were concerned "they

could get in trouble when my background investigation was being completed." Fortunately for Robinson, "Eventually they came around – this is a chance for me to get out of the city and they are supportive." TC was supported by his family, "My parents pushed me. All my brothers and sisters, my fiancée – no negativity from my family." He was not as fortunate with his friends, "I lost some, I did." TC even experienced a form of ostracization, "People said I betrayed my race." Jones and Hawk reported support from family and friends. Hawk's family "wanted me to pursue something medically, but they also understood this was probably the best fit for my personality."

Research Question Responses: SQ3

SQ3 for this study was: How do minority police recruits describe the recruitment process? The recruits described gender disparity for female recruits participating in Academy S. Wells shared, "I know for me and two other females in our class they were all hired really fast." Aside from this disparity, the recruits' experiences were all over the place and thus consistent with the research.

Three recruits applied to several academies, with one applying to seven academies and another applying to 10. Two of these recruits had similar experiences in that they would make it to the background, everything would be going well, and then they would get a rejection letter. Kono disclosed, "I would get through the process until background check. I was verbally told I was at the top of the list, they wanted me for the academy, and then a month later I would get a rejection letter." Earl described a similar experience, "I would make it to background and then I would get a letter that I wasn't accepted." In both recruits' experiences, it was the background investigators who shared why they weren't being accepted by the agencies. Earl, "I was friends with the recruiters that conducted my background checks and when I spoke to them after getting denial letters, I was told it wasn't about me but about where I am from." Kono found out from the

background investigator at her current employer, "I had gotten a poor review from a previous employer, that I had left on bad terms, and I explained to my investigator what happened and he was like that makes sense."

Several recruits shared that they had been seasonal officers and that this experience had motivated them to apply, helped with the recruitment process, or both. Robinson knew he wanted to work for the agency where he was a seasonal officer, "I really wanted to work for [employing agency]." Robinson described the support he received, "Command staff reached out to me when they knew I had applied and were encouraging."

The majority of recruits described the recruitment process as good. Jones, "The recruitment for the agency was pretty good." Hawk described that it took him longer to complete the process, however, "once the ball started to get rolling it went pretty fast." It was five months from date of application until the ball started to get rolling. Hopps stated, "It was great, they were very helpful." Lily reported the recruitment process as, "pretty simple." She did identify one area of concern with the process. Lily's background investigators changed during the process and she had to disclose to the two male investigators at different times about an assault that had occurred in college. Lily stated, "I wish I had had a female. In the end, it was ok."

A few recruits found the process to be stressful because of the amount of information the application packet required, the polygraph, or the wait. Bates, who had been a seasonal officer had been proactive throughout the application process, reaching out to her agency about the application. Despite this proactive approach, she disclosed, "I was a little worried when I did not hear from them." Barnes stated, "The polygraph was horrible but once I passed, I knew I was in. I had no criminal record, nothing in my background, and it was really stressful." Lacey also

experienced stress during the process, "It stressed me out to apply, the packets were so big, a lot of info…The waiting time was more stressful than filling out the applications."

Summary

Chapter 4 provided a detailed description of the participants of this study including age, gender, and race or ethnicity. The participants consisted of 15 entrance-level police recruits from two different police academies in Maryland. The study was designed to learn about the lived experiences of these recruits who were participating in entrance-level police academies.

Major themes were developed from coding interviews and discussion questions as well as analyzing personal goal statements. The three major themes were motivation, support, and challenges. Each theme resulted in subthemes. A total of nine subthemes were identified, including help others, community perspectives, wanted to be a police officer, prove, encouragement, Covid-19, recruitment, gender, and the academy. The results of the analyses were used to address the research questions. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy. The theories guiding this study were Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) and McClelland's (1973) needs theory. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs was essential to the research as it described the needs individuals must meet to attain self-actualization. Because of the culture of the entrance-level police academy and its paramilitary roots, the research considered the role of needs and the eventual self-actualization of the recruits.

Summary of Findings

The focus of the research was on the lived experiences of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level academy and included data from individual interviews, that were conducted virtually, discussion questions, and a review of personal goal statements. The data for this study was collected via video interviews and email correspondence. I was able to record the interviews, transcribe, code, and analyze the data resulting in the identification of three major themes *motivation, support,* and *challenges.* From these themes, nine subthemes were identified including help others, community perspective, wanted to be a police officer, prove, encouragement, Covid-19, recruitment, gender, and academy.

A central research question and three subquestions framed the focus of this study about the lived experiences of minority recruits participating in an entrance-level police academy. The central research question of the study was: What were the lived experiences of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy? The question arose from

the existing research that consistently identified the lack of minority police officers Donahue (2019); Gibbs, Lee, and Bachnak (2018); and Suboch et al. (2017).

Many of the recruits described the experience of the entrance-level police academy in positive terms and several referred to their peers in the academy as "family." The concept of the hiring agency as family was reported by two recruits and contributed to their applications to these agencies. Robinson's exposure to the police profession began when he was a seasonal officer for a resort town. He described his seasonal experience as, "The senior officers and supervisors were very helpful and made me feel welcomed into the family even though I was only there for a short time." Hopps also had previous experience with her agency having completed an internship with them while attending a community college. Hopps described her experience as:

> I did an internship for [hiring agency] summer of 2018 and I originally wanted to do Park Police. I came to an internship that was supposed to be one month and it turned into multiple months…[they] made me feel like I was part of their family.

From the initial contact with the employing agencies to the entrance-level academy, family remained an important concept for the recruits. Barnes reported forming the following bond with her peers in the academy, "My peers have been wonderful and I would not want to go through this experience with anyone other than them." Prentis also described the bond within her recruit class, "I think something I didn't expect from where we were to where we are now is the bond I developed with everyone in the class." In the words of Hopps, "It's like a family." TC continued the theme from the academy as he described his expectation for his employing agency upon graduation, "I will be the only African American officer but it is a good courteous department with a family-like environment.

SQ1 was: How did minority police recruits describe their lived experiences to complete the entrance-level academy and the academy experience? Recruits were informed they had been selected to participate in the research because of their minority status, yet the only minority issue that was reported was specific to gender. A few recruits disclosed Academy S hired the female recruits at a faster rate than they hired the male recruits. Pepper shared that when her agency determined female applicants were receiving offers from other agencies faster, "they hired us sooner." Wells also realized female applicants received preferential processing, "I know for me and the other two females in our class, they were all hired really fast." Pepper viewed the desire to hire female applicants as filling a void more than hiring the most qualified candidate, "My perception is that we [females] are so badly needed, they [hiring agencies] aren't taking the best they can take, they're just taking what they need."

Gender was also viewed as an issue between the instructors and the class. Pepper described her perception that female recruits "get more chances to mess up that we shouldn't be given, but within the number of chances we can be given." Lily found herself questioning if some of the instructors had a bias against female recruits, "I feel like some of the instructors look at us [females] and ask why are you here? Even though they tell us they are teaching us so we make it home, I get the sense they want us to quit." As stated in Chapter 4, Pepper shared:

> This is the first recruit class with a large number of females coming through. There has been testosterone arguments. Not sure the instructors were prepared to handle it. The instructors have had to adapt to the larger number of females.

Aside from the gender issues, the recruits described their experiences as primarily positive. Two recruits considered motivation as either something they needed to instill or something an individual needed to bring to the academy. Hawk, a class leader, disclosed, "the

biggest challenge was motivating the class." Jones measured his peers by their willingness to give it their all. Jones expressed this in the following:

> I need you to push yourself beyond your limit. I know you might not be in the most physical shape, or the fastest person, or the smartest person. The only thing I ask from you is you give me 100% and I will give you mine – hands down.

> When there was disparity among the recruits, it was attributed to the perception that some recruits were "just going through the motions to meet the minimums" (Hawk); personality differences, "The opposite are the people you butt heads with" (Lily); or the lengthiness of the academy due to Covid-19. Kono described the togetherness that has been brought on by Covid-19 as "I've got two really good friends in the academy. They drive me insane but we really do spend a lot of time together. It's difficult with this academy because Covid really messed everything up."

Despite the gender issues and personality differences, the consensus of the recruits from both academies about their lived experiences as they completed the entrance-level academy and their academy experience was that they formed a bond. Robinson, "At first it was rough…Now when we struggle everyone pitches in to help." Earl, "That's the only way to explain it, We're a family." Hawk, "We really do push each other." Wells, "My classmates definitely want to see everyone succeed." Prentis, "I know they refer to the thin blue line but it's amazing how we started off as strangers and now we would have each other's backs during anything."

SQ2 was" How did minority police recruits describe the support (or lack of support) they received from family members and friends once they decided to become a police officer? Understanding support was an important component of this research. Aiello (2019) reported the primary influence to become police officers were having family or friends who were officers.

Overall, the recruits reported feeling supported by their family members and friends. Generationally, the female recruits described their grandparents as being worried about them because they were "girls." Fathers and male figures were mostly excited and encouraging while mothers were more reserved. Pepper and wells both described their fathers as "excited" when they told them they wanted to become police officers. Similarly, they each described their moms as "worried" or "scared." Wells stated, "My mom and grandmother were scared because of fear. They didn't want their little girl to get hurt because of the job."

Several recruits described some family opposition. Robinson and Earl have family members who have criminal records. For Robinson, his family members were concerned the background investigation required for the job would impact them. "My family was concerned they could get into trouble when my background investigation was being completed. Eventually, they came around." Kono's siblings were not fully supportive. Her brothers do not "want me to be killed" and her sister is "not pro-police." Kono had not spoken to her siblings since entering the academy in March and was not aware of any changes in support that may have occurred. Earl, who is from a family with a "generational history of drug trafficking" sacrificed his relationship with two brothers, yet had an uncle tell him, "you're breaking the family curse."

SQ3 was: How did minority police recruits describe the recruitment process? Existing literature has indicated a disparity among the composition of police agencies for almost 100 years with a composition of agencies that are approximately 70% Caucasian males and 30% minorities. This question sought to understand the experiences of minority police recruits. The experiences were consistent with existing literature for most of the recruits and several described the process as good. Hopps stated her recruitment process was "great" and Lily stated, "The recruitment process was pretty simple." Others described the process as lengthy. Earl stated he

was "hired almost one year from the date I submitted my first application to a police department." Hawk reported his process was "Very lengthy compared to my peers." Kono also described a lengthy process that "took about a year and a half."

Discussion

The results of this study aligned with both the empirical and theoretical research. Previous researchers focused on recruitment (Aiello, 2019; Doreian & Conti, 2014; Jolicoeur & Grant, 2017). Aiello (2019) examined gender and recruitment and O'Neill and Holdaway (2007) studied race and recruitment. The motivation of recruits was examined by Donahue (2019), Gibbs, Lee, and Bachnak (2018), and Suboch et al. (2017). Yet, Deuchar et al. (2019), determined the "words of the officers" were missing in the research. The study was based on two theories, Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and McClelland's (1973) needs theory. The themes that were identified in this study were consistent with the related literature. The following presents how this study contributes to the empirical and theoretical research and provides insight into the experiences of minority police recruits participating in entrance-level police academies.

Empirical Literature

The literature in Chapter 2 examined the lack of trust between police officers and the communities they serve; as well as factors that contributed to this, including the low number of minority officers (Delgado & Stefancic, 2016; Donahue, 2019; Suboch et al., 2017); and the belief that hiring more minority officers will improve community relations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2016; Donahue, 2019; President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015; Suboch et al., 2017). Almost 100% of the recruits who participated in this study stated a desire to improve community relations as motivating them to complete the entrance-level academy and embark on their career as police officers.

The existing literature focused on the need for increased diversity among police officers but lacked insight into the motivations of minorities to become police officers. This section connects the findings from the study to the existing literature, utilizing the voices of the recruits to fill a gap in the literature regarding the motivation of minority police recruits to complete the entrance-level police academy. According to TC, "…we need more diversity."

The first area identified in the literature review was the lack of trust between police and the community. Smith and Aamodt (1997) identified concerns about the relationships between police officers and minorities that Delgado and Stefancic (2016), Donahue (2019), Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2017), the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015), and Suboch et al. (2017) identified in more recent research. The recruits' responses revealed a strong desire to improve the relations between police and communities. Interestingly, only a few recruits tied the disparity in these relations to race or gender, instead, they viewed it as poor relations between police and citizens. Prentis disclosed that she was not aware of the poor respect for officers outside of the tri-county area in which she resided and worked. She described her increased awareness in the following:

> I guess I didn't know until they showed us videos every day that officers are not as well-respected in other areas as they are in Charles, St. Mary's, and Calvert. It's crazy that there are people out there who do not want to respect you the same way you want to respect them.

When discussing how her motivation to become a police officer has changed since she entered the academy, Hopps stated, "I hope to help improve law enforcement's view held by the community." Barnes offered, "My motivation to be a police officer is to make a change in the community, especially with everything going on with police. I just want to help improve that."

The research into the lack of trust between police and communities attributed some of this to the low number of minority officers (Delgado & Stefancic, 2016; Donahue, 2019; Suboch et al., 2017). The recruits shared awareness of the lower numbers of minorities in policing and discussed the impact they hope to have on citizens to help improve this. TC, who disclosed a learning disorder, viewed his role as a police officer "to be a person to help let young minorities know you can come from a disability and overcome it and do a good job." Robinson, Earl, and Hawk all referenced a desire to show other minorities, especially youth, that they can become police officers. In Hawk's words he wants to "help others, especially as a minority and to be able to say – hey, I'm one of you." Hawk expounded on this describing himself as sharing "the same experiences that these kids do" and how he "can relate to them, can be a catalyst, can open doors for them."

Additional research purported that hiring more minorities will improve police and community relations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2016; Donahue, 2019; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017; the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015; Suboch et al., 2017). Earl expressed the need for role models to attract more minorities to policing, "There will not be more black officers in policing if we don't try." Earl also described the significant losses he experienced as a result of deciding to become a police officer, "Just knowing I lost two brothers, friends, and family members to this job; I did not want my efforts, time, and the support of others to be a waste of time." Wells described the impact a role model in her employing agency had been on her and she has decided she wants to be the same, "you want to be that officer that's there for the community." TC recognized the need for more minority officers, while also identifying resistance to minority officers by the communities they serve:

My view is we need more diversity – we need to fill that gap. It's going to help society. People don't like change – they don't. People feel if you're African American, you're betraying your community and they are raising their children that way. It takes a strong individual to do this job. You have to lay your life down for people you don't know.

An issue identified by Rossler et al. (2019) was the screening out of minority recruits. Linos et al. (2017) reported a subjective bias in recruitment that found applicants with Black sounding names were called back less frequently than applicants who did not have Black sounding names. One male recruit described experiences in which he had made it to the background investigation for several agencies, only to receive a rejection letter soon after. Upon making some inquiries of the background investigators that he knew, he was told: "it wasn't about me but about where I am from." One female recruit described her experience with an agency that called her "and said a Lieutenant was going to call in a few days and I never heard from them again."

Several researchers focused on the motivations of women to become police. Chu (2018) reported the motivations of females to become police officers were out of a desire to help others. Gibbs (2018) reported six motivators including salary, the opportunity to help others, interesting work, law enforcement orientation, security, and family influence. The female recruits in this study identified the following motivators, 70% reported wanting to help others, 20% reported family influence, and one reported this was initially supposed to be a stepping-stone to a law enforcement career with an emphasis on forensic work. Additionally, three female recruits identified more than one reason. Two identified the desire to help others and family influence and one identified help others and salary. Lily disclosed, "I want to help people plus the pay is good from what I was making."

Theoretical Literature

The study was grounded in two different theories, Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and McClelland's (1973) needs theory. Maslow's hierarchy examined motivations based on basic needs being met, resulting in the individual moving toward the fulfillment of higher-level needs (Stoyanov, 2017). McClelland's needs theory considered an individual's motivation to be based on achievement, affiliation, or power motivations.

The entrance-level academies in this study were commuter academies, meaning that the recruits were able to go home every night. The recruits were employees of their hiring agencies and therefore were paid a salary while participating in the academy. Although it was not discussed in the research, the basic needs of food, shelter, and rest that were identified by Maslow should have been met by the fact that the recruits were employed and being paid a salary. A few recruits referenced the potential for the most basic level of need to be lost if they did not complete the academy. Earl struggled with the firearms qualification and reported, "There was the stress of knowing that if I didn't pass this [qualification] I would not have a job and I was determined to make it." Lacey expressed a similar struggle, "Practicals were the most difficult thing I have done. They stress six times to master something or you don't pass. I worried about not having a job, how am I going to pay rent, have a car, etc.?"

Maslow's second level in the hierarchy of needs was safety. The recruits' safety needs were being met through training and they shared this when discussing how they overcame challenges in the entrance-level academy. Wells described her challenge in the academy as "being on the shy side" and recognized the conflict this could create for her as an officer since "I am going to a job where I am going to have to talk to people." She found the academy to be a

good environment in which to overcome her shyness, "Being in the academy has helped with that. I have to talk with instructors and others and get out of my shell."

Maslow's third level in the hierarchy of needs focused on psychological needs and belonging and love was considered the third level (Maslow, 1943; Stoyanov, 2017). The majority of the recruits were at this level as was evidenced by their references to their peers as family and people who would have their backs. When describing peer support, Wells shared, "We have supported each other in different ways…We really share with each other." Prentis stated, "I don't know any particular ways but I know they've been there for me with everything." Lacey found that her peers "motivated me to keep going and I would do the same for them." Hopps was feeling the effects of being tased earlier in the day and described the experience as "I did not like it but my classmates were very-supportive. They got tased too." Barnes described belonging as, "When I mess up, I can get really down on myself and my classmates are there with positives. They've just really been there for me."

The fourth level described by Maslow was also related to psychological needs and focused on esteem (Maslow, 1943; Stoyanov, 2017). The recruits described frustration at the length of the academy and found themselves to be questioning their commitment as they were faced with multiple delays due to the pandemic. According to Hopps, "We've been here long enough I might as well finish going through." Several recruits placed a value on completing the academy and questioned if they would be letting themselves or their families down if they did not complete the academy. When asked about challenges in the academy and overcoming them, Prentis shared:

> I really want to make my family proud. They know it was really what I wanted to do. One, I knew this is what I wanted to do but how would my family feel if I just gave

up and didn't give it my best shot?

Bates disclosed a similar concern about letting her family down, "I know I can do this, and I would be doing a disservice to my family if I did not try." Lily also described how her esteem was tied to her family, "I never want to feel like a disappointment, I want to make my family proud." Kono was focused on herself regarding esteem, "I do not want to get this far and then not finish."

Maslow's final level was identified as self-actualization and Gupta (2002) interpreted this as an officer's promotion to a specific rank. For this research study, self-actualization, for some, was getting into the academy. Jones had been hired as a correctional officer as it was the first position his agency had available when he applied. He really wanted to be a police officer but when he was told he was being placed in corrections he shared, "I felt so angry because I was not getting the career that I wanted." After accepting the corrections offer, Jones told his agency, "I will be a police officer because I don't like when I'm told no…Here we are two years later I'm finally where I want to be."

For other recruits, self-actualization may be graduation from the police academy. Sykes determined the purpose of the academy was "to make me stronger so when I graduate and go on the streets, I'll be extremely well-prepared." Barnes shared, "I am so excited to get out and meet the people of [my] county. I lived here all my life, so it is going to be different now that I am doing a job that people will look up to me." Hopps described how she "would be honored to earn a spot alongside so many great people who have come before me within this agency." Hawk described his motivation, "I knew there was an end goal." Similarly, TC shared, "I did not come that far to waste 4-5 months in the academy. I was motivated to get out and keep my job."

Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs was described as being fluid, a person could move

up and down in fulfillment of their needs. As the recruits come closer to graduation and the

realization of their goal to complete the academy, the hierarchy could begin all over again. Upon

graduation, they will be completing field officer training as rookies.

Not all of the recruits consider graduation to be a final step or their achievement of self-

actualization. Kono envisions additional schooling and ultimately a career in forensic

psychology. This was evidenced in her statement, "I want to look back in 20 years and be like I

did that, I frickin did that. I want to be proud of myself." Robinson wants "to work narcotics."

McClelland's (1973) needs theory was the second theory utilized in this research. Needs

theory focused on an individual's motivation as it related to achievement, affiliation, and power.

Examining motivation, Woodside, et al. (2020) described power motive as striving to control

others for individual reasons or to "achieve higher goals for the greater good" (p. 42).

The desire to improve relations between the police and the communities they serve can be

viewed as a higher goal related to the greater good or power motive. Several recruits discussed

wanting to improve relations; however, this seemed to be a secondary motive. Sykes described

an awareness of the "way policing is in the U.S." and she determined "In the end, I just want to

help people, not only to challenge myself but to help people in my community." Kono explained,

"Every day at the academy we are made aware of these dangers, but I think I would be more

disappointed in myself if I didn't make some attempt into making this world a better place."

Barnes described her desire to improve relations, "I believe I will be nothing but a positive

influence on this community." Lily stated, "If I can make someone's bad day a little less bad by

treating them like a human, that's what I want to do…Sometimes people need encouragement."

Building on power motive as the greater good, several of the male recruits wanted to be

role models for younger citizens. Earl shared, "I wanted to come back and be someone youth

could look up to." TC stated, "I am going to be a person to help let young minorities know you can come from a disability, and overcome it, and do a good job." Although the concept of being a role model was discussed more by the male recruits, Barnes described how she wanted to "be a role model for someone who wants to do this but doesn't know."

Affiliation motive was described by Woodside et al. (2017) as striving for positive personal relationships and may even include restoring relationships with others. As with power motives, affiliation may apply to restoring relations between the police and the communities they serve. A difference; however, was the affiliation of being a police officer and restoring the relationship between "police" and communities as opposed to restoring a relationship between people and communities. Prentis described developing an awareness that "officers are not as well respected in other areas as they are in [my county]." She went on to explain, "I want to stop these problems before they become bigger issues." Wells also aligned her affiliation with being a police officer in the statement, "How society looks at them." Wells described her affiliation motive as "wanting her community to know that that officer is really cool, really helpful." Bates described that "it is important to build relations with the community," yet she expressed us vs. them mentality when she stated, "I think it is important to break down the divisions between us [police] and certain groups." Lacey shared:

> Right when I started the academy was when everything with the police started to happen. Scrutinized, defund, all cops are bad. Now, at this point, I am more motivated to show that not all cops are bad and want to change perspectives.

Finally, TC described his motivation as "…I am going to be the one to prove there are good cops and they do good for the community" and Hawk believed he was offered "the opportunity for me to experience the world where people are at."

Affiliation motive was also evident in the way the recruits described their experiences as a member of their cohort. The close, tight-knit relationships that developed among the recruits allowed them to affiliate themselves as a member of something bigger than themselves. Robinson, "…when we struggle, everyone pitches in to help." TC described the affiliation among recruits as "If one failed, we all failed." Prentis also described her affiliation with her peers, "…the bond I developed with everyone in the class. On days when your motivation is not here, the 24 people in your class can pick you up." Finally, Sykes summed it up as "basically if anyone is struggling, we help each other. If there is an assignment someone is struggling with, we help each other. If it's a struggle with something physical, the same thing…and help each other."

The most common motive was achievement motive, striving for success (Woodside et al., 2020). The recruits were motivated to complete the entrance-level academy. For Hawk, "December 16th" graduation day. Woodside et al. (2020) also attributed achievement motive as being something that could be compared to a benchmark. For many of the recruits, the benchmark was helping others. Examples of this were discussed in Chapter 4. Hopps viewed achievement in the following manner and the experience she described was based on completion of a more than 500-hour internship with her employing agency:

> They say you want a job where you never have to work a day in your life, and while I know law enforcement careers are very-challenging, I never felt like I was working. I was always just helping my community and those who serve my community, it was a very fulfilling job.

Implications

The implications of this research serve to fill a gap in the literature regarding the experiences of minority police recruits in the entrance-level police academy. Specifically, the

research provided insight into the recruits' entrance-level experience and their motivation to complete. The research examined how minority police recruits perceived support (or lack of support) from family members and friends. Finally, recruits offered insight into the recruitment process.

Theoretical Implications

The theories guiding this study were Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and McClelland's (1973) needs theory. Maslow's theory was selected because the entrance-level academy is capable of meeting the recruits' basic needs while preparing them to enter a profession where they can achieve self-actualization. McClelland's theory was selected as determining the motivations of the recruits was aligned with achievement, affiliation, or power motives could help with both recruitment and the entrance-level police academy.

The experiences described by the recruits supported Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Although not directly addressed in the research, it was known that the recruits were receiving a salary while they were in the academy, ensuring the most basic needs of food and shelter were met. What the research helped to clarify were the safety needs, belonging and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs.

Safety needs were identified in the recruits' statements about training. Lily described the instructors as "They don't want us to fail." She further described the repetitive nature of the instruction as "Sometimes it is too much but then you come out of it and you're like I get it." Barnes discussed how the academy has changed her, "I feel like I am more mentally stronger, more aware, more positive, and wanting to do something." Lacey was able to find her voice, A challenge I knew I was going to have from the beginning was that I am quiet, and I am…I was told I need to be louder…By the end, I was loud enough." Similarly, Wells described being

"more on the shy side and obviously that would be a weird thing because I am going to a job where I am going to have to talk to people. Being in the academy has helped with that." Sykes found being in the academy has "made me challenge myself. It's made me push myself and made me do things I did not think I could do before."

Belonging was central to the recruits' experiences. As TC stated, "If one failed, we all failed." Race and ethnicity were not an issue for the recruits. As Robinson stated, "I never felt singled out for my race or background. Any disparity I experienced was due to the different departments represented by my classmates." TC shared, "Within a month we came together and it is unique to see the backgrounds: out of state, college, economic background, and agencies." Earl expressed, "The people I work with, Class 85 is well rounded." Barnes described the experience as "In the beginning, we all came from different places but we all have the same goal, to become a police officer." Hopps described the entrance-level academy experience as "It's amazing – it's like another family."

The recruits seemed to have all had the need of belongingness and love met in the entrance-level academy. Some had moved into the level of esteem as indicated by their descriptions about how they felt prepared to perform the duties of a police officer. As Wells stated, "Leading up to the academy I never thought I'd be getting into it-rolling around with the guys. Now it's ok."

Moving into self-actualization was what the recruits were preparing for. Academy E graduated December 16th and Academy S was preparing to graduate in mid-February but had been suspended again following the interviews because of Covid-19. A point to consider is that the recruits may find they repeat the processes of meeting their needs once again as they will be starting at the bottom rung of the ladder as rookies. For Hawk, the recruit experience was

"Humbling, forced by the nature of the academy to put yourself down to a line equal with everybody."

As stated previously, McClelland's theory was selected as determining the motivations of the recruits could help with both recruitment and the entrance-level police academy. For the majority of the female recruits, helping others (achievement motive) was the primary motivation, followed closely by a desire to prove to themselves they could become police officers. Wells described that her motivation was "…the fact that I wanted to do this for so long and I wanted to prove to myself that I can do this." From a recruitment perspective having recruiters who look like the applicants you are trying to attract would be important. In the entrance-level academy knowing someone from your agency or being in a class with others you can relate to because of gender seemed to be valuable to the recruits. This supported Reaves (2012) determination that personal connections were one of the ways individuals were motivated to become police officers.

Bates highlighted the value of knowing others in the entrance-level academy when describing going to the academy, "I was very fortunate, I was sent with five others from my agency…We felt tight-knit walking in." Lacey shared "Once I saw another female, it calmed me down and I knew we would get through it together." However as the academy continued, she discovered "It was not as gender-segregated as I thought it would be."

Affiliation motive and power motive were important to the recruits for different reasons. Affiliation motive tied directly into Maslow's hierarchy as the recruits bonded with each other, meeting the need-belonging. The recruits described studying together, the importance of group chats, and general support of each other. Recruiters may want to harness the power of electronic communication via text and social media apps that allow for quick check-ins and communication with recruits. Several recruits mentioned the amount of time it took for them to be hired from the

time they applied until they had a confirmed seat in the class. The recruits did not discuss how they communicated with their instructors.

Power motive directly-related to the current environment, specifically the relationship between police and society. Several recruits mentioned wanting to be out in the community to help improve relations. As the current perceptions about society's view of police were based on current events, the only implication identified in this research was the perception some of the recruits held about society being against police, perpetuating us vs. them mentality.

Empirical Implications

The research contributed to the literature regarding the experiences of minority police recruits participating in an entrance-level police academy. Primarily the research supported much of the existing literature about minority recruits. The literature identified a lack of trust between police officers and the communities they serve. The recruits' responses revealed a strong desire to improve the relations between police and communities. Wells shared that she knew when she became a police officer she was "going to pull people over and fight the bad guys" but she has learned "it's way more than that." The academy experience has shaped her views in the following way, "…you want to be that officer that's there for the community. You don't want to be that one bad officer. I want to be the best officer out there." TC discovered that a police officer is also "a doctor, social worker, and emotional support person."

The literature also purported that hiring more minorities would improve police and community relations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2016; Donahue, 2019; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017; the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015; Suboch et al., 2017). The recruits echoed this. Several recruits discussed a desire to be role models, Earl, TC, and Hawk. Although Robinson did not directly-state wanting to be a role model, he did discuss how his family

members who were involved in criminal activity saw that entering the academy to become a police officer was "a chance for me to get out of the city and they are supportive."

An issue identified by Rossler et al. (2019) was the screening out of minority recruits. Linos et al. (2017) reported a subjective bias in recruitment that found applicants with Black sounding names were called back less frequently than applicants who did not have Black sounding names. Suboch et al. (2017) described the experiences of minority police officers who had been called traitors by members of their own communities. Earl experienced this in the loss of relationships with two of his brothers, family members, and friends. TC experienced opposite reactions. Some people asked him why he wanted to be a police officer stating to him, "people don't like the police, they're all crooked," while others encouraged him stating, "hey go do it, we need good people, you're a good person." TC also shared that he was told "I betrayed my race yet we need more diversity." Wells disclosed that one of her friends stopped speaking to her, "She did not view police the same way I did because she had a really bad experience with them. We stopped talking."

Several researchers focused on the motivations of women to become police. Chu (2018) reported the motivations of females to become police officers were out of a desire to help others. Gibbs (2018) also reported one of the top motivators for female recruits was the opportunity to help others. As stated in Chapter 4, the female recruits in this study identified the following motivators, 70% reported wanting to help others, 20% reported family influence, and one reported this was initially supposed to be a stepping-stone to a law enforcement career with an emphasis on forensic work. Additionally, three female recruits identified more than one reason. Two identified the desire to help others and family influence and one identified help others and salary. Lily disclosed, "I want to help people plus the pay is good from what I was making."

Practical Implications

Practical implications resulted from the research. The first practical implication pertained to recruitment. It has long been recognized in the research that the recruitment process to become a police officer is lengthy. Linos and Riesch (2020) outlined the number of steps involved in the recruitment process for the Los Angeles Police Department. The process began with a preliminary background application and then moving into personal qualifications. Linos and Reisch (2020) reported there were problems with the Los Angeles Police Department's processes and so did the recruits who participated in this study.

Two of the recruits described applying to several agencies and going through the initial steps, making it to the background investigation, and receiving a rejection letter from several different agencies within a month of making it to the background. Earl reported being rejected at this stage solely because of his socio-economic status and Kono disclosed her rejection as stemming from one bad reference from an employer she had left on bad terms with. In both situations, the recruits were not informed of the reason for the rejection and were not provided an opportunity to respond to the findings. Ultimately, they were hired by agencies where the background investigators were willing to delve deeper and follow up with the applicants on the discrepancies they identified. Agencies may consider re-evaluating the discretion given to the background investigators, as well as any processes or procedures for determining how subjective information in an investigation may be. Because these two recruits were eventually hired, one could conclude there is subjectivity in the background investigation that may be disqualifying otherwise qualified applicants.

Also related to the recruitment process was the rapid hiring of female recruits in Academy S. As shared by Wells, she and two of her female peers were fast-tracked through the

hiring process because the hiring agency "did not want another agency to take us." Because the agency was able to process these recruits quickly, one questions why this isn't the standard, especially since the agency recognized they would lose these applicants because of the lengthy hiring process. The fast-tracking of the female recruits contributed to the research of Todak et al. (2018) who reported skepticism was held by minority officers who believed there were underlying intentions for their hiring and recruitment. Some female recruits expressed their concern that agencies were settling for certain female applicants.

Another practical consideration for recruitment was the handling of sensitive information. Lily described an experience in which she had to meet with two different male background investigators because of changes in the agency during her application process. As a result, she had to disclose the details of an assault she experienced in college twice. Lily expressed how it would have been better if she had had a female background investigator or if she had only had to disclose it once. Although this may be a rare experience, it is an experience that could cause an applicant to withdraw from the process.

Identifying practical applications for the academy setting can be done based on the experiences described by the recruits; however, the unusual circumstances brought on by the State of Emergency that has been in effect since March 2020 in Maryland and the disruption to the academy setting impacted both academies. Where some recruits found the structure to be inconsistent, or the training to be less intensive than they had expected, or the instructors to be disorganized, they all attributed this to Covid-19. Barnes disclosed, "Sometimes I think they are very unorganized but I can say that is probably related to Covid." Therefore, practical applications for the academy were not addressed in this research. Wells summed the experience up in the following statements:

My expectations of the police academy beforehand, so I definitely thought it was going to

be very intense. Workouts every single day, getting yelled at every day…I think my

experience has definitely been different, especially with Covid. It's definitely been a

different class because of Covid.

Additionally, Hawk described his belief that Covid-19 had impacted the operations of the

academy. "Expected a fast pace, drill, physical training all of the time, very structured all of the

time. Covid brought the academy structure to a minimum. Couldn't PT as much, couldn't DT as

much, I had expected more." Lacey shared a similar sentiment, "I expected it to be hard but

Covid messed up drill instructors, physical training, how the academy usually runs."

<h3 style="text-align:center">Delimitations and Limitations</h3>

Embarking on this journey it became clear early on in the research that there had always

been a limited number of minority police officers. For this study to contribute to the existing

literature, it was obvious that the focus of the research needed to be on minority police recruits.

Additionally, the research had to focus on the lived experiences of the recruits, resulting in a

decision to use a transcendental phenomenological approach. As described by Moustakas (1994)

the transcendental approach allows for the investigation of human experience. Using a

transcendental phenomenological research design allowed the minority police recruits who were

participating in an entrance-level police academy to share their experiences in their own voices.

The identification and selection of the participants was a delimitating factor as recruits

had to be participating in a POST approved entrance-level police academy at the time of the

interviews. Participants also had to be minorities. Minority was defined as "a culturally,

ethnically, or racially distinct group that coexists with but is subordinate to a more dominant

group" (Britannica, 2020). The recruits consisted of one Hispanic and Black female, nine

Caucasian females, four Black males, and one Asian and Indian male. Selection standards for police recruits were established in Maryland regulation; therefore, delimitations were not selected for education background or age. While these were not delimitations, the recruits' variables included military or college backgrounds and a range in age from 21 – 31 years of age. Female recruits tended to express a more general desire to want to help their communities and male recruits wanted to be role models to the minority youth in communities.

The study was limited by the global Covid-19 pandemic that resulted in a State of Emergency being declared in Maryland in March 2020 and that continued to be in effect while the research was conducted. Operations at both academies were severely impacted and included the delivery of training that consisted of a blended model of in-person classroom instruction and off-site cyber classes in which recruits remained off-campus and received virtual instruction. Academies suspended operations several times due to recruits and/or instructors testing positive for the virus. These suspensions resulted in the time to completion being extended several times. For example, Academy S should have completed the academy in November 2020 and at the time of the interviews, they had been extended until mid-February. Lily described the limitations and impact of Covid-19 as "…we've been in almost a year. With Covid there have been moments when I've questioned myself, do I really want to do this?" Lacey described it as "What I expected was definitely not what went on." Wells shared, "I feel like I haven't had the true academy because of Covid."

Another limitation of the study was the structure of the academies. Both academies consisted of recruits representing multiple agencies and different types of law enforcement. For example, there were local municipal police recruits mixed with sheriff's deputies. Although the law enforcement roles were similar, there were some differences in their duties. Bates described

the differences, "It is interesting, I am learning a lot of stuff that will not apply to me in the same manner as my peers who work for other agencies." She did see the benefits of learning about the responsibilities of allied agencies, sharing "It's a good idea to know how they work." Two areas she identified as impacting the allied agencies but not impacting her agency included "courtroom [security]" and "water rescue." The limitation in the structure also meant that insular academies, academies that only train recruits for their agency and live-in academies were not represented in this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study sought to learn about the lived experiences of minority police recruits who were participating in an entrance-level police academy. At the time the recruits were participating in the academies, there was a national outcry to defund the police and a general distrust for law enforcement that stemmed from several incidents in which minorities had died during interactions with police officers. One question this study sought to understand was the biases recruits believed they brought to the setting or that developed as a result of their participation in the entrance-level academy.

Two questions addressed biases that were pre-existing and biases that developed as the result of participating in the academy. Specifically, one question asked recruits to, please describe any biases about being a police officer that you believe you brought to the academy. Of the 15 participants, 14 responded they did not have any biases. The one who felt he brought a bias described the bias as a dislike for a specific culture that was directly attributed to experiences he had with people from this culture.

This study did not seek to address what was going on in society regarding law enforcement and community relations, yet many recruits mentioned the negative perceptions

they believed society held toward police officers. The extent to which this was addressed in the academies is unknown; however, there were indications from recruits that one academy addressed it. Prentis specifically stated, "I guess I didn't know until they showed us videos every day that officers are not as well-respected in other areas." When considering recommendations for future research, the influence of the academy on police recruits perceptions or biases could be valuable in understanding relationships between police officers and society.

An implication from the study was an insight into how the culture of police, often described as the thin blue line, evolved. Rahr and Rice (2015) voiced their belief police officers were perceived as belonging to a culture colloquially known as the thin blue line; this culture is believed to begin in the police academy. The research confirmed the belief shared by Rahr and Rice (2015). Several recruits discussed the shared experiences they had with their peers, getting tased, being sprayed with OC spray, and how it was an experience that non-police officers do not have. Hopps shared about her taser experience, "I did not like it but my classmates were very-supportive. They got tased too." The concept of bonding and family was prevalent throughout the recruits' discussions about becoming police officers and their academy experience. Police culture as it is associated with the thin blue line tends to have a negative connotation; however, the way its evolution was described by the recruits does not bear a negative connotation. Additional research into the experiences of police recruits in the academy should yield additional information about police culture.

Gender was an issue that was brought up during the research. The female recruits in Academy S knew their hiring process had been completed quickly to prevent other agencies from hiring them. They also felt that agencies were settling for certain female applicants, accepting those who met minimum standards, instead of hiring the best-qualified recruits. Additionally,

female recruits felt that the acceptance of those who met the minimum standards resulted in them being given more opportunities because they were females. The impression was resentment toward those female recruits who were perceived to be less capable than the female recruits who held these perceptions. Gender also seemed to be an issue in Academy S with some female recruits describing a bias they perceived certain male instructors as holding against them or not being sure how to handle a recruit class with such a large number of females. Research into gender biases in police recruitment and academies could benefit police agencies in both hiring and training.

Summary

Minorities are not well-represented in the police profession. Research exists regarding the recruitment of police, yet there is limited information about the motivations of minorities to become police officers or the experiences of minority police officers in the entrance-level academy setting. This study determined that race and ethnicity was not a factor for minority recruits participating in an entrance-level police academy. Robinson specifically addressed racial disparity stating, "I never felt singled out for my race or background." Instead, the majority of the recruits described developing a bond with their peers and discussed the environment as supportive. Family was a term that was frequently used, including references to sibling rivalry. Hopps described her experience as, "We are like a family but we all have our personalities and I feel like I've been able to blend with each sibling group within our academy family.

Recruits were also impacted by strife between police and communities and the desire to help was a primary factor described as motivating them to become police officers. Some recruits described their desire to help as being motivated to be a role model for youth. Earl shared that he "wanted to show the youth there were options other than drugs and what they saw in the

neighborhood." Earl also saw himself to be a role model for future officers, "If I give up, others will give up and I do not want to give others a reason to give up. There will not be more Black officers in policing if we do not try." Robinson, who grew up in an impoverished neighborhood and was raised by a single mom who worked three jobs, described his motivation to become a police officer,

> My other motivation is the belief people have that "we don't have options." In school, we did not have computers, barely even books. I was raised by a single mom and sometimes there was no food, no lights, and she was not home. Struggling for a meal takes you to other things [the drug trade]. My mom worked hard to get us to a better place. Every chance I get I go back home. I coached a track team and taught others that you make your own bed.

Other recruits were altruistic when describing their motivations to become a police officer. Lily described a desire to "make someone's bad day a little less bad by treating them like a human – that's what I want to do." Hawk viewed his role as a police officer as being able to "Help a mom stop being a junkie; help someone who was in a car accident."

Recruits learned there was more training than they anticipated and the role of the police officer was more comprehensive than they imagined. The majority of the recruits described the academy experience as enlightening. Several disclosed they were unaware of how much training was involved to become a police officer, with Prentis stating, "they do a lot more than you see on TV." Similarly, Hopps shared, "I knew they went through tough training…I never even thought about how they were taught." Lacey shared, "I definitely did not realize what was involved. I learned how much time and effort goes into being a cop, how much you need to learn, how much training you have to go through." Kono summed the learning experience up with the statement,

"There is no question that this career path is not easy, it's taxing physically and mentally." Barnes stated, "I did not know how much they did…learning how much they did behind closed doors I've gained so much more respect for them than I previously had." Even Jones, who thought the academy would be easy based on his experience in the correctional officer academy, stated, "Come to find out its more than the corrections academy. I thought I have this and about two months in realized this is not going to be a cakewalk."

Finally, recruits shared the impact of their participation in the entrance-level police academy on them personally. Kono reported, "I'm proud of myself for how far I've come." Sykes found that she had challenged herself and the experience "made me push myself and do things I did not think I could do before." TC shared his realization of the profession and what it could mean, "It takes a strong individual to do this job. You have to lay your life down for people you don't know."

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Appendix A: Interview Questions and Follow-up Questionnaire

Interview Questions

1. Could you please introduce yourself to me as if you were introducing yourself to the oral review board during the hiring process to become a police officer?

2. Please describe to me why you currently want to become a police officer?

3. Please describe your family members' responses when you told them you wanted to become a police officer.

4. Please describe your friends' responses when you told them you wanted to become a police officer.

5. Please describe your experiences with recruitment once you decided to apply to become a police officer.

6. Please describe your motivation(s) to become a police officer.

7. Please describe your expectations of the entrance-level police academy before you began and if your expectations were influenced by family members or friends.

8. Please describe how your motivation to become a police officer has changed since beginning the entrance-level police academy.

9. Please describe the peer support you experience in the academy.

10. Please describe any impact you believe being a minority recruit in a police academy has had on you.

11. Please describe any biases about being a minority police officer that you believe you brought to the academy.

12. Please describe how the biases in the previous question have changed, stayed the same, or new ones that have developed.

13. Please describe how the structure of the academy (assignment of squads, residential/commuter, down time, classroom, practical training) has impacted your experience in the academy.

14. Please describe how you and your peers have supported each other through the academy.

15. Please describe any challenges you may have experienced while in the academy.

16. Please describe your motivation to overcome any challenges you experienced while in the academy.

17. Please explain if your perceptions about being a police officer have changed from the onset of the academy through today.

18. Please describe your views about the factors that influenced your decision to become a police officer and whether they have changed since you entered the academy.

Follow-up Questionnaire

1. Reflecting on the questions I have already asked you, please describe anything else you would like to express about what motivated you to become a police officer?

2. Think about the individual who has been an important influence on you, please describe how they reacted and what they said to you (or how they might react and what they might say to you) when they found out you had applied to and been accepted into the police academy.

3. Please describe the contribution(s) you believe you will make to the community you serve as a patrol officer once you have graduated the academy.

Appendix B: Consent Form

Consent

Title of the Project: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study of the Motivations of Minority Police Recruits Participating in an Entrance-Level Police Academy

Principal Investigator: Jennifer A. Beskid, EdD Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be an entrance-level police recruit who is currently participating in an entrance-level police academy that has been approved by the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to describe the lived experiences of minority police recruits who are participating in an entrance-level police academy.

Historically, the profession of police officer has consisted primarily of white males. It is understood that police officers frequently interact with individuals from all races who are male, female, transgender, etc. During times of civil unrest between citizens and police officers there has been a public outcry for police agencies to hire officers who more closely represent the demographics of the communities they serve yet policing as a profession continues to attract mostly white male officers. This study seeks to learn about the motivations of minority applicants to become police officers.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

Should you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:
1. Participate in an in-person or video interview with me within the next two weeks. The interview should take between 15-30 minutes.
2. With your permission, the interview will be recorded. Audio recording will be done for an in-person interview and audio/video recording will be done for a video interview.
3. Provide a copy of any essay/personal statement you wrote when completing your application to become a police officer with your hiring agency. If you do not have a copy of the essay, you will be asked to grant permission for me to obtain a copy of the essay from your employer.
4. Review and reply to an email within two weeks of the interview that consists of the transcribed notes from the interview and follow up questions. You will be able to provide feedback about the transcription.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include insight into the motivations of minority police recruits to become officers. These benefits may provide guidance to academy instructors regarding the structure and content of the academy as well as human resources recruiters.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be anonymous. Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

I, the researcher, am employed by the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. (Department). Within the Department is the Police Training and Standards Commission, an independent Commission. The Commission establishes and verifies standards for the certification of all police officers in the state. In my role, I complete policy work on behalf of the Commission; however, I do not perform any duties pertaining to your certification or ability to be certified as a police officer. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University, the staff of the academy, or your employer. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study Jennifer Beskid. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at jbeskid@liberty.edu You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Justin Necessary at jnecessary3@liberty.edu.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

Contact Information

The information being collected below is to allow for the researcher to send the transcribed interview for my review and comment as well as the questionnaire. I agree to be contacted as the result of my consent to participate. I also understand that if I fail to reply to the researcher's email I may be contacted by an email and/or phone call. Additionally, if I do not reply to the transcribed interview within 10 business days of the day it was sent, the researcher will consider my responses in the transcribed document as approved.

Participant Printed Name:_____

Email:_____

Contact Phone: (_____) _____ - _____

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand that the study is about. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____   _____
Participant Signature   Date